MODERN BRITISH FICTION: DIALOGUE WITH THE THRILLER

By

NILANJANA BOSE GUPTA

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This work analyzes the different ways in which the genre of the thriller is used by modern British novelists. Contrary to the claims of several critics, this work suggests that the appropriation of the thriller form is not necessarily a culturally subversive act, but that writers develop basically three different kinds of relationships with the genre in their novels. The first chapter summarizes some of the more common prevalent critical views on the relationship between the thriller and mainstream fiction and also surveys, briefly, the history of the genre. The second chapter looks at writers who are using the conventional structure of the thriller to discuss contemporary political and social issues, like P.D. James, Rendell, Forsyth and le Carré. The second chapter deals with writers who have a specific ideology that they substitute for the usual, superficial ideology inherent in the form of the thriller. The examples of Ambler, Greene and Fowles are

discussed. The fourth chapter suggests that some mainstream novelists comment intertextually on the genre of the thriller and in doing so challenge the structural ideology of the popular form. Examples include novels by Murdoch, Spark and Lessing. The conclusion suggests that there are several ways in which contemporary writers appropriate the genre of the thriller and that they are not all inherently culturally subversive. Some writers like James or Le Carré actually utilize the thriller's claim to be the only genre that is able to present the "whole truth" and only those novels which challenge this claim can be called truly subversive. This study argues for a more differential way of seeing the trend of appropriation of the genres of popular fiction.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Several critics like Leslie Fiedler and John Barth see postmodernism as a movement that "aspires to a fiction more democratic in its appeal than late-modernist marvels" (Barth 87) because of the way in which several writers use forms that are generally considered part of popular culture in new, dynamic ways. Fiedler sees this as a culturally subversive act because by appropriating forms of popular culture, these writers undermine traditional distinctions between "high" art and "popular" culture. Other critics like Gerald Graff claim that the postmodern trend of utilizing popular forms is really bred from the fear that literature is becoming increasingly marginalized, and that this gesture of combining the forms of popular art with "serious" issues is really a desperate attempt to regain a central position for literature once again.

Most critics see this trend of obscuring the boundaries between "high" art and "popular" art as an essentially postmodern trend that has developed only in recent years. However, I believe that this characterization of the trend ignores the novels of several older writers like Greene who have combined the form of popular fiction with the serious issues conventionally considered material suitable for only "high" art. Although Greene did divide his works into two categories, "novels" and "entertainments," a look at his novels shows that there is essentially

little difference between these two categories. His "entertainments" follow the structure of conventional thrillers. Murder, pursuit and betrayal are acted out against a background of political intrigue. These works are peopled by assassins, secret agents and helpless heroines, yet he introduces into these novels concerns such as the conflicts born out of personal beliefs, the complexities of individual moralities and so on. A secret agent like D in The Confidential Agent has to come to terms with his personal inability to interact and form relationships with other people, and the focus of the novel is on D's personal crises rather than the mission that he is trying to carry out. But these issues are also the themes of Greene's "novels": Scobie in The Heart of the Matter also tries to reconcile his personal beliefs and his actions. More interestingly, this conflict is also set in the framework of the agent Wilson's pursuit of Scobie. There is a similar sense of suspense built up in both these novels and ultimately Greene's categorizations seem to be rather arbitrary. Greene uses the same style of representation in the two kinds of novels: an extremely detailed realism, melodramatic sentences, and the use of symbolism to generalize the personal conflicts as archetypical. Thus, it seems that Greene successfully blurred the categories of the "serious" novel and the thriller without producing the ideological implications of postmodernism's use of forms of popular fiction.

Then there is another category of writers who generally write mainstream novels, yet have tried out the forms of popular fiction once in a while. Kingsley Amis, one of the first critics to consider popular fiction seriously, experimented

with various forms. Though his early novels are conventional, he has tried out several kinds of structures in his later novels. The Riverside Villas Murder (1973) is a competent detective story, conventional in both form and content. Perhaps only the sensitive portrayal of Peter Furneaux, a suburban adolescent caught up in the events, makes this novel stand out from the typical detective story. However, at least this novel succeeds as detective fiction, which is more than can be said about The Anti-Death League (1966), which tries to both use the conventions of thrillers and satirize them. The plot centers on a military base where an important secret weapons testing is scheduled. There are a spy and an officer from a special division who is trying to catch the spy, but the cast of characters is much more varied than is common in thrillers. There is the distressed chaplain Ayscue, the Hindu officer Naidu, the cynic Hunter, the mentally disturbed Catherine, the perverted doctors at the mental home, and many more memorable characters. However, I think this very spectrum of characters and ideas becomes too much for the form. The style too wavers between seriousness and farce rather unsurely. More successful is Amis' James Bond novel Colonel Sun (1968) written under the pseudonym Robert Markham. Dedicated "To the memory of Ian Fleming," it is faithful to the original Bond novels in plot and style. The Crime of the Century (1975) is more self-reflexive because of the way in which the crime is solved. A writer of thrillers is brought in by the government as an expert and he insists that the rules of detective fiction be used to solve the crime. It turns out that he is right. Thus, a curious relationship is set up between this novel and

the tradition of detective fiction. However, like many of Amis' novels, it does not succeed either as a good thriller or a meaningful critical comment on the form, and remains merely a marginal comment on the form and function of the thriller form. Amis also experimented with other forms of popular fiction. The Alteration is what the novel itself defines as Time Romance. In the novel Amis recreates modern England as it might have been if the 16th century Reformation had not taken place. This novel is similar to some novels usually classified as science fiction that imagine future worlds without crucial events, like the American involvement in World War II having taken place. Amis' novel The Green Man (1969) combines the social realism of mainstream novels with the fantasy of the horror novel and climaxes with the central character's conversation with God, who is presented as a dapper young man in a well-cut suit. Like many of his experiments, this one is rather unsuccessful as the various modes of representation are not combined seamlessly and tend to jar. It is, however, interesting to see the range of forms that Amis tried out.

Another mainstream novelist, John Braine, tried his hand at writing a thriller. The Pious Agent (1979) is a domestic thriller which follows Aloysius Flynn, the pious agent of the title, in his mission to disband the extreme left-wing terrorist group FIST. This conspiracy is found to include prominent men like a successful industrialist, Flynn's confessor, Labour M.P.s, film makers and even the Director of the D16. However, the characters in general are weakly created and

Braine fails to reach the optimal balance between realism and fantasy that is essential for a thriller to succeed.

More successful are Anthony Burgess' uses of the conventions of science fiction and the thriller. His spy novel Tremor of Intent (1966) is a well-written thriller. The plot is almost prototypical and contains effective surprises, as any thriller should. The characters, especially the hero Hillier, are well-conceived and through Hillier Burgess raises concerns about commitment and freedom of choice similar to those in the novels of Le Carré. His A Clockwork Orange (1962) is a futuristic novel in the tradition of Well's Time Machine and Orwell's 1984. Like those novels, Burgess is using the form of the novel to raise questions about contemporary society. The framing of the Enderby trilogy is also a futuristic one. The novel begins and ends with time travellers from the future visiting the present to study the life and times of the poet, Enderby.

Doris Lessing also experimented with several kinds of genres after her first few novels, which were traditional in form. A group of Lessing's science fiction novels use the convention to question and re-orient the reader's perception of earth's history. Most of these novels are narrated by "aliens" who offer alternative histories of earth's development. This device tends to emphasize man's anthropocentric blindness, which is shown to result in a limited understanding of our history. In some novels Lessing uses the apparently ideal world of the Canopeans to offer a philosophy of harmony and wholeness that is contrasted to the fragmentary understanding of humans. Even Lessing's later novels which are

not science fiction seem to be trying to undermine "objective" positivist thinking. In books like Briefing for a Descent into Hell (1971), Memoirs of a Survivor (1974) and The Fifth Child (1988), she creates a space that seems to be totally imaginary, until the characters--who are portrayed in realist terms--walk into these spaces, sometimes literally. These novels blur our usual tendency to think in binary terms like "realist" and "fantastic" by confusing the boundaries between them.

Other writers have also experimented with the forms of popular fiction in various ways and this fascination has been noted by some critics. David Lodge, in the book Novelists at Crossroads, suggests that several post-war novelists "already recognized the obsolescence of realism and hence of the traditional novel, [and were] exploring, with modern sophistication, the purely 'fictional' modes of allegory and romance." (12)

> Such narratives suspend realistic illusion in some significant degree in the interest of a freedom in plotting characteristic of romance or in the interest of an explicitly allegorical manipulation of meaning or both. They also tend to draw inspiration from certain popular forms of literature or subliterature, in which the arousal and gratification of very basic fictional appetites (such as wonder, wish-fulfillment, suspense) are only loosely controlled by the disciplines of realism: especially science fiction, pornography and the thriller. (19-20)

What Lodge seems to be arguing is that genres like the thriller offer writers both a freedom from the necessity of using realist techniques while at the same time providing a structural framework which negotiates or demands different reading strategies from the reader than those demanded by the traditional novel.

Other critics like Huyssen in After the Great Divide note that "the hidden dialectic of avant-garde and mass culture" (Huyssen 9) has existed for a while. He points out that though in the modernist movement high art and mass culture existed in opposition, there have been several attempts to bridge the gap and points to examples from "Courbet's appropriation of a popular iconography to Brecht's immersion in the vernacular of popular culture, from Madison Avenue's conscious exploitation of avant-garde's pictorial strategies to post modernism's uninhibited learning from Las Vegas" (16) and says that "there has been a plethora of strategic moves tending to destabilize the high/low opposition from within." (16) The examples of mainstream writers who have written novels using the framework of genres of popular fiction show, I believe, that this trend cannot be considered merely a postmodern development. Rather, the writers have tried to do various things with the forms.

Holquist in a landmark essay "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction" advocates one of the most common theories about the relationship between the thriller form and postmodernist experimentation. He says that "what the structural and philosophical presuppositions of myth and depth psychology were to Modernism. . .the detective story is to Post-Modernism." (135) He explains that

> Just as earlier Mann had depended on his readers' knowledge of the Faust legend, and therefore could achieve certain effects by changing the familiar story in crucial ways, so Robbe-Grillet and Borges depend on the audience's familiarity with the conventions of the detective story to provide the subtext they may then play with by defeating expectations (155)

and the "most common expectation. . .which Post-Modernism defeats is that of syllogistic order." (155) Holquist explains how this is achieved by saying,

> the metaphysical detective story does not have the narcotizing effect of its progenitor; instead of familiarity, it gives strangeness . . .Instead of reassuring, they disturb. They are not an escape but an attack. . .[They] have fought against the Modernist attempt to fill the void of the world with rediscovered mythical symbols. Rather, they dramatize the void. If, in the detective story, death must be solved, in the new metaphysical detective story it is life which must be solved. (155)

Yet to be able to make this neat categorization, Holquist must make some assumptions which undermine the strength of his argument. First, when he suggests that the Modernist writers used myth and depth-psychology to provide neat answers to philosophical questions of existence, Holquist seems to be simplifying the achievements of the Modernists. Second is his assertion that the typical detective story is limited to the "classical" type; the type usually called the White Glove School by historians of the genre, best represented by the novels of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers. In fact he has to admit that there is a "third--call it novelistic--stream" (147) that he dismisses as "impure" which is separate from both the mainstream novel and the classic detective novel. However, as this list includes such a wide spectrum of writers as Hammett, Chandler, Le Carré, Ross MacDonald, John D. MacDonald, Donald Hamilton, Graham Greene and James Hadley Chase, the narrow specifications laid down by Holquist seem to trivialize his argument. Most of these writers were and are extremely popular and quite a few of them are considered by critics, not as

revolutionary redefiners of the form, but rather as the most successful practitioners of the genre.

Perhaps the common perception shared by Holquist that detective stories are always extremely limited and structured is due partly to the "rules" laid down by the Detection Club in 1930. These rules treated the detective novel as a game between the reader and the writer and the rules were originally conceived to prevent the writer from taking an unfair advantage. All members of the Club had to solemnly swear that they would follow the 'Ten Commandments of Detection' which insisted, among other things, that the criminal be mentioned early on and that the detective should "well and truly detect the crimes" without reliance on "Divine Revelations, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo-Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence or the Act of God." (qtd. in Symons 13) Also, the founders of the Club realized the importance of the unity of mood, and so one rule insisted that there should be no love interest as that would ruin the unity of the story. In practice, these rules have been honored more in the breach. Even Christie's most successful stories have been at the expense of these rules. The Murder of Roger Ackroyd had the narrator as the murderer and in And Then There Were None the murder remains unsolved. There is no "detective," and only a signed confession gives the reader the identity of the murderer. By having Peter Wimsey fall in love and marry, Sayers violated the injunction that love interest should not be part of a detective novel.

Even in stories that followed the rules of the Detection Club, there are subtle differences in the values embedded in the writings of various writers. Christie herself has been accused of replacing the scientific, analytical reasoning of Holmes with common sense based on "sharp observation and orderly thought as systems of detection." (Knight 114) Both Poirot and Miss Marple use their ability to notice the significance of apparently minor household details and their insight into character to solve crimes. Critics have claimed that this shift represents modern man's growing disillusionment with science as the solution to all problems.

In fact, one of the interesting aspects of the detective fiction genre is its constant evolution. If we look at the history of this relatively new form, we can see that writers in this genre have repeatedly tried to extend and modify its conventions. The Sherlock Holmes saga is usually considered by historians of the genre to mark the beginning of the immense popularity of the form. Most critics, like Knight in Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction, contend that the social conditions and philosophical attitudes of the period combined to produce the perfect audience for Conan Doyle. External factors like the establishment and success of a centralized police force, combined with more intangible factors such as the average person's belief in science, technology and rationality as the answers to all problems, provided the climate for a detective who could use scientific analyses to "read" the physical clues and then use logic to combine the results of experiments for the right answers. In Knight's words, Holmes became popular

because "the readers had faith in modern systems of scientific and rational enquiry to order an uncertain and troubling world, but feeling they lacked these powers themselves, they needed a suitably equipped hero to mediate psychic protection." (80) Holmes embodied "the contemporary idea that dispassionate science was steadily comprehending and so controlling the world." (79) However, these are not the only values that the structure of the detective story can uphold.

One of the next major detectives seems to have been created in almost direct opposition to the values of Sherlock Holmes. G.K. Chesterton's popular detective, Father Brown, gets his inspiration directly from his religious devotion. In fact, Chesterton is often accused of paying too little attention to the physical aspects of the case. "Logicians of the detective story complained with some bitterness that Chesterton outraged all the rules they had drawn up, that he did not tell you whether all the windows were fastened or whether a shot in the gun-room could be heard in the butler's pantry." (Symons 77) Often Father Brown uses intuition rather than logic to find the answers to the puzzles. Because we, the readers, are not always taken through the process of detection, Father Brown's success does often seem to be divinely inspired. Physically too it would appear that he was visualized in direct opposition to Holmes; Father Brown is fat, unused to physical activity, clumsy and absent-minded in his daily life. It is Father Brown's ability to sympathize with the criminal and his willingness to accept true repentance as sufficient punishment that make him stand out among detectives of that time. Also, Chesterton used these stories to make points about religious and

social issues of the times. Overall, these stories seem more humane than Doyles, given Holmes' obsession with physical clues and his almost contemptuous attitude towards society.

The hero of another popular series of that time was Raffles, first seen in Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman (1899). Apparently Raffles is the perfect gentleman. He is the finest slow bowler of his decade, though he, naturally, does not play professionally and seems to spend his time in well-bred idleness. Yet it turns out that he is actually a professional burglar. In this series the moralities are rather confused, for though Raffles is a burglar with very few scruples, he is very clearly the hero of the series. In fact, Conan Doyle, incidentally the brother-in-law of the creator of Raffles, strongly disapproved of Raffles and is reported to have admonished Hornung, saying, 'You must not make the criminal a hero.' (qtd. in Symons 85) Thus, right from the beginning, the form has offered more flexibility than Holquist suggests.

Of course the major thrust towards change in the values of the form came from the inception of the American "hard-boiled" school of detective novels, and there one of the problems of definition also begins. The heroes of Hammett's novels no longer depended on detection based on specialized knowledge about poisons or cigarette ash. Instead the Continental Op and Sam Spade depended on common sense and often violence to solve their cases. The distinction between the hero and the villain became more obscure as physical confrontation with gun in hand became acceptable for both. In a novel like The Red Harvest (1929) the

element of suspense has changed as the identity of the 'bad guys' is clear from the beginning and the detective seems to be responsible for almost as many deaths as the villains, yet this and other novels by Hammett were and still are hailed as both realistic and among the best in the genre; which raises questions about the confines of the genre. In these novels detection takes second place; part of the emphasis shifts to the realistic depiction of character. Long series of dialogue are often presented without or with very little authorial comment. The motive of the hero too has changed. In The Red Harvest, for example, the hero seems content to initiate a series of shootouts to eliminate criminal elements in the town of Personville. In The Maltese Falcon Sam Spade wants to find the killer of his partner not from some abstract love of justice, but because it is bad for business if one's partner is murdered and the criminal is left unapprehended. In these novels, as in the novels by Chandler, the interest in the plot is secondary. The background, characters and descriptions are more interesting than the actual crimes and their solution. Chandler has written and lectured about what he was attempting to do with a form so universally despised in essays like "The Simple Art of Murder," and to some extent he did succeed in bringing respectability to the genre. However, writers like Chandler also changed the genre.

The emphasis on the solution and complex plotting was undermined. Morally too, these novels, especially Hammett's, offered a more democratic world view as repeatedly the upper classes were shown as corrupt and greedy and the hero often emerged as the champion of the oppressed. Organized crime and

professional criminals became the villains, instead of amateurs goaded into murder for love or inheritances. Even if, as in The Postman Always Rings Twice, the motives seem hackneyed, the realistic portrayal of deliberately unglamorous and unheroic characters makes the novel seem rather different from the neat sophistry of the White Glove School.

Symons, in Bloody Murder, shows how changes in the socio-political climate affected a number of writers who tried to adapt. He cites the changes in the stories of Ellery Queen where, he argues, the writers tried to tackle social issues within the framework of the detective story in the post-World War II era. Although these changes were happening in America, their influence was felt in Britain too. Most successfully, James Hadley Chase soon was writing books full of sordid crimes, violence tinged with perversion and morally ambiguous central characters which were completely different from the traditional detective novel. Several novels showed a noticeable shift from belief in the amateur, gentleman detective to a reliance on police officers, perhaps reflecting the audience's growing feeling that individuals could not confront criminals without the backup of large bureaucratic organisms. Many of them, though, like Michael Innes' successful detective Appleby, managed to retain the manners and tastes of a gentleman within the police force. More recently, Adam Dalgliesh, one of P.D. James' detectives, is supposed to be a poet in his free time and has several publications to his credit.

Many of the more recent detective novels, both in England and America, also convey a sense that even though a particular crime has been solved and the criminal suitably punished, evil exists as a powerful force in our everyday life and detectives can only scratch at the surface. Writers like Ruth Rendell and Gwendoline Butler in England and Patricia Highsmith in America refuse to end their novels on a note of "sweetness and light." (Palmer 67) The end of a typical Agatha Christie novel would reinforce the belief in an ordered, genteel society which had effectively purged the evil elements and could go back to a serene life. A novel like A Coffin from the Past refuses the possibility of the existence of a neat, basically moral society partly because of the sheer venom of the evil that seems to be more powerful than the representatives of good in the novel. Technically the murderer is apprehended, but because one man was using another to actually commit the murders, the implication remains that Joseph Wolf, about whom the police are totally ignorant, is responsible for triggering the series of violent acts as part of his mission to "prepar[e] the ground for revolution. I planted my British seed. . .and it destroyed Tom Barr [an honest politician], and with him a little bit of the British political scene." (Butler 188) Coffin, the detective, knows that "There'll always be questions that never get answered" (183) at the end of the investigation. Novels like these are part of the mainstream of detective fiction and yet they do not offer neat solutions to the problems they raise.

Meanwhile another offshoot of the form was developing rapidly in Britain. The First World War saw the proliferation of the spy novel, though Conrad's The Secret Agent (1907) is often given the status of the first spy novel and Le Quex's first novel of intrigue was published in 1890. Initially spy novels were extremely right-wing and xenophobic. Both John Buchan's novels and the series centered around Bulldog Drummond, though different in complexity, share similar fears of left-wing subversion and fears of all foreigners, especially German or Russian. These novels were extremely popular in the period just after the First World War when patriotism was high. The Englishmen are heroic and rightist almost by virtue of birth. In contrast, the sequence of stories by Somerset Maugham centered around Ashenden (1928) served to de-glamorize the business of spying, though the political implications of the stories are rather similar to those by Buchan.

Eric Ambler's spy novels served to question the political biases of the traditional spy novel by promoting left-wing philosophies, once again proving the resilience of the form. In fact the two strains of political allegiances within the genre of spy fiction have survived simultaneously into the present time. The most famous spy, James Bond, was created in 1953 and in a sense this series carries on the tradition of Buchan in its simplistic characterization and political allegiance, while the more complex novels of Le Carré continue the tradition of Maugham's spy novels.

One of the problems caused by the rapid development of the genre is the problem of definition. While all historians of the genre agree that the spy novel, the suspense novel, the police novel and the domestic political thriller are all sub-genres of what was once called the detective novel, there are no commonly accepted terms to identify the genre as a whole. In this study, I will follow Palmer's system of nomenclature by which he refers to the genre as a whole as the thriller form and identifies the sub-genres individually.

Even this brief history of the form will, I believe, show the remarkable adaptability of the form. The common concept that all detective novels are repetitive intellectual puzzles with no relation to reality ignores the history of the genre. Like all successful popular art, the detective story must reflect and react to changes in the concerns of society and if today we are less certain about the possibilities of absolute answers, then the best detective fiction will reflect that unsureness. In this context, it seems that the best way to analyze the connection between thrillers and mainstream fiction is by trying to establish the nature of the relationship set up by the novelists.

Julian Symons expresses the problems caused by the crossovers between "high" art and popular fiction rather explicitly in his book, Bloody Murder: he tells us that in the first edition of the book, he had totally ignored writers like Borges, Eco and Robbe-Grillet, and says that many people had criticized him for this omission so he felt compelled to add a section on these "avant-garde" writers in the second edition. However, he dismisses the novels of these writers as

curiosities which, he seems to imply, are merely of academic interest; they provide an "ideal hunting ground for structuralists" (185) but should not really be considered successful mystery stories. More academic critics have also disagreed on the classification and definition of the several types of thrillers being written.

In an article on Raymond Chandler, Jameson says that "The detective story, as a form without any overt political or social or philosophical point, permits. . .pure stylistic experimentation." (625) This seems to be a rather sweeping statement, especially as it comes from a neo-Marxist, but I think that further on in the same article, he makes an important point about the form of the thriller when he writes on the character of the detective. The detective, according to Jameson, "is able to feel the resistance of things, to permit an intellectual vision of what he goes through on the level of action." (632) Like this one, many of the observations that Jameson offers about Chandler are also applicable to several of the writers of the more complex thrillers. Jameson says that "the unique temporal structure is a pretext, a mere organizational framework, for. . .certain moments in life which are accessible only at the price of a certain lack of intellectual focus." (627) These moments are, according to Jameson, the small, anonymous, fragmentary experiences that constitute most of our daily lives. The frame of the detective novel allows the writer and the reader to isolate and consider these unimportant, coincidental occurrences without endowing them with an excessively symbolic aura. The other point that Jameson sees as an advantage of the form is that, like the picaresque novel of the past, the thriller allows the writer to explore

several different facets of society within the same novel. These two characteristics of the thriller are exploited by the authors who, like Rendell and James, often seem to be more intent on creating a concretely detailed world than in the plot and the murder.

In P.D. James' novels, one of the interesting aspects is the creation of a world peopled by a variety of individuals who are developed much beyond the demands of the plot. Critics of the detective story often complain that the demands of the plot result in the reduction of the characters to mere symbols that are made to move around like puppets. James takes care with even minor, marginal characters and shows us the pattern of their lives. For example, A Shroud for a Nightingale begins with the eventless, almost pathetic lives of two spinsters who live in a small, shabby apartment in London. The small rituals of the two elderly women are described in tremendous detail--who makes the tea, who likes tea sweet and so on. Yet this episode is of no importance to the main story, and the only link between this description and the story that follows is that one of these women goes to inspect the hospital at which the murders take place and actually witnesses the first murder. From then on, however, these women are not mentioned at all in the novel. Yet, as Jameson suggests, the morning rituals of the two women describe the lives of normal, ordinary people which the very form allows the writer to explore and concentrate on, without excessive intellectual and symbolic over-emphasis. In fact in James' novels it sometimes seems almost as if we are reading two different kinds of novels simultaneously:

one which is concerned with the crime and its solution, the other, which like mainstream novels, is interested in the ordinary lives of ordinary people. The very conventions of the thriller demand that the writer concentrate on details, because most often the clues that lead to the solution of the crime are the apparently insignificant details. Perhaps the normal concentration which a reader of thrillers gives to details allows the novelist the freedom to concentrate on the minute details of everyday life which would seem superfluous or burdensome in a traditional mainstream novel.

Other novelists sometimes use the form to comment on the way these minor, supposedly insignificant details are what actually constitute and mould our consciousness. Le Carré too builds up the portraits of his spies by piling detail on detail and connecting the worlds of daily routine and espionage. In Little Drummer Girl the central character becomes defined by the details of her "cover" to the point where she begins to believe in them more than she does in her real life. In A Perfect Spy we see the lives of the Pyms through the small, apparently meaningless motions of daily habit. Yet after Pym's disappearance Mary, his wife, begins to recall and connect little comments and incidents that she now endows with extra meaning as she tries to reconstruct Pym's secret life.

Another useful reading strategy is to see texts as Eagleton describes them in Criticism and Ideology:

> as a sportive flight from history, a reversal and resistance of history, a momentarily liberated zone in which the exigencies of the real seem to evaporate, an enclave of freedom enclosed within the realm of necessity. We know that such freedom is largely illusory--that the

> text is governed. . .The text's illusion of freedom is part of its very nature--an effect of its peculiarly overdetermined relation to historical reality. (72)

Within this "momentarily liberated zone", thrillers seem to be able to offer several different kinds of ideologies; even, if necessary, ideologies directly opposed to the values of the capitalist structure that engendered the form. Eric Ambler in Doctor Frigo is trying to expose the capitalist or imperialist manipulations of the economy and government of a Third World country; and many other thrillers offer 'glimpses' into the illegal and corrupt connections between politicians, big business and even the law enforcement agencies.

All this would seem to undermine the reader's belief in the systems that s/he reads about, but here the texts' ability to "manage" or reconcile the contradictory impulses they raise must be considered. In The Political Unconscious, Jameson writes that

> The modernist project is more adequately understood as the intent. . .to "manage" historical and social, deeply political impulses, that is to say, defuse them, to prepare substitute gratifications for them and the like. But we must add that such impulses cannot be managed until they are aroused. (206)

This attempt to "manage" or "defuse" emotions aroused by the text can be seen in thrillers too. However, some thrillers seem to arouse impulses against the system which created the conditions for their existence that they cannot successfully defuse. These novels are then called the "negative" thriller; the thriller without the "sweetness and light" at the end. Several of the novels of Graham Greene,

like Brighton Rock and A Gun for Sale, would fit this category as the intensity of fear and evil aroused in the plots of these novels is left unresolved in the stories. For example, in Brighton Rock though Pinkie and his gang are destroyed, Ida remains as a possible source of further disruption and the leader of organized crime, Colleoni, is of course only more firmly established as the person who controls the illegal activities in the apparently peaceful tourist spot. In A Gun for Sale, the story ends with the immediate threat of war and the powerful armament manufacturers remain as the real powers that control England. In more conventional thrillers like those of Ian Fleming or Mickey Spillane, the "big bang" ending that Palmer identifies as a necessary close to all thrillers, serves as a textual strategy that defuses the evil that has been described. Palmer points out that the mere elimination of the threat is not enough; Jameson's comment on "managing" provides an explanation for the almost ritualistic, excessively violent endings of most thrillers.

Sometimes, as in An Unsuitable Job for a Woman, the task of providing an adequately just ending is left to divine intervention, which reinforces a faith in a higher power while emphasizing the helplessness of mortals to carry out true justice. Some novels solve particular crimes while leaving the root causes undisturbed as in some of the novels of Ruth Rendell, where, though the murderer is apprehended, there is a feeling that, more than the individual, it was the social system that necessitated the crime and there is no reason why a similar crime will not be soon committed again. These novels do "manage" the emotions

that the text arouses, but there are a few nagging questions that remain undealt with. John Fowles' The Collector goes to an extreme: the heroine or victim is killed and the criminal is shown at the end targeting another woman for the same type of kidnapping. Obviously the sense of fear generated by the novel is left totally unresolved and "unmanaged."

One of the factors linked with this form of experimentation is the modernist and post-modernist consciousness that traditional social realist novels have codes and formal demands which are no more "natural" than the codes required by genre fiction. The influence of French critics like Barthes and Derrida is, I believe, closely connected with the range and nature of experimentation of several of contemporary writers. So too is the popularization of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism which emphasized the simultaneous existence of several modes of reality, represented by the co-existence of several "languages" that attempt to reflect and capture those realities.

In fact several of the experimentations can be seen as an attempt to engage several different forms of representation in a dialogue that comments on differing but co-existing literary attempts to present reality. For example, the novels considered in the fourth chapter of this study seem to be attempting to combine varying models of representation to comment on the problem of the codification of reality. The Black Prince by Murdoch, for example, seems to be doing this by combining the traditional realistic mode of representation within the format of the detective novel. In this novel, Pearson, the narrator, is using traditional realistic

methods of presenting the characters and incidents on one level, while the framework of the detective novel is a sub-text. One of the themes of this novel is the problem of deciphering the "truth," as Pearson is punished for a murder he apparently did not commit. The almost constant references in the novel to various forms of writing seem to draw attention to the "polyphony" of languages that the characters use to express themselves. This is emphasized in the "Postscripts" that are written in the "voices" of the different characters. The varying uses of language are highlighted, as in Julian's use of "poetic" metaphors that obscure rather than clarify meaning, or Marloe's sales pitch for his forthcoming book on Pearson.

Similarly, Lessing's The Good Terrorist uses the sub-text of the thriller to comment on the inability of the conventional thriller to analyze and consider the impact of individual, personal psychology that determines one's behavior. In The Golden Notebook the different aspects of Anna Wulf's character are literally presented to us as the four different voices through which she explores her own consciousness and her interaction with society. Lessing's experiments with the genre of science fiction often deal with the problem of representation of history and attack simplistic social equations that leave out the impact of the individual's perception of experience. In The Good Terrorist she seems to be exploring the connection between public, political action and private, individual emotional experience through the consciousness of characters like Alice. The relationship between her unhappy childhood, the unsatisfactory relationship with Jasper and

her violent acts of rebellion against society are brought together in a way that suggests a strong co-relationship between the revolutionary political acts and her inner, emotionally troubled perceptions of reality. All of the characters who are involved in the CCU are shown as having had traumatic experiences which have led them to belong in a marginal, violent, political action group. In this novel, Lessing seems to be trying to expose the inadequacies of the form of the thriller which is usually concerned with only physical objects and surface details by placing her emphasis on the mental and psychological reactions of the characters. Yet the framework of the thriller allows her a basic plot structure which prevents her novel from becoming merely a "curiosity": something that Robbe-Grillet's novels are sometimes accused of being.

Spark's novel too uses the subtext of the thriller to show how pathetic and irrelevant the world of espionage is compared to issues of moral, religious and even personal integrity and discovery. In The Mandelbaum Gate, the part of the novel that is concerned with the sub-plot of espionage seems ridiculous, melodramatic and ultimately pointless because all the information being traded was false anyway. In comparison, the characters who treat the spies and their network with contempt, like Barbara and Suzi, seem more mature and sensible, while the officials of the British Foreign Office, the Gardnors and even Freddy, when he is with them, seem comically over-concerned with the intrigues of politics.

These three writers seem to be trying to show the limitations of the popular form through the form and emphases in their own novels. Very obliquely, these novels undermine the premise that the thriller form is capable of expressing "truths" about the socio-political environment. All of them present or emphasize the gap between personal, individual experience and "objective," "factual" accounts of events.

In this work, I argue that the ideology of the form as identified by critics like Palmer in his book Thrillers has often been modified by writers who are working within the mainstream of thrillers such as Ruth Rendell, P.D. James and the early Fredrick Forsythe. Meanwhile other writers, like Graham Greene, Eric Ambler and John Fowles, have tried to pre-empt the inherent ideology of the traditional thriller by substituting different systems of values. Finally, there is, I will argue, a group of writers who use the thriller as an implied intertext of novels that appear to be "straight" novels. This group includes Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing and Muriel Spark.

CHAPTER 2

EXTENSIONS OF TOPIC

While "popular" fiction is usually accused of having little relevance to reality, some of the better detective fiction writers do try to integrate social and political issues into their novels. Because they almost always are set in contemporary society, thrillers have the flexibility to include in their plots issues that are dominating socio-political reality. This chapter surveys the novels of four writers who incorporate serious issues into the structure of conventional thrillers. It is interesting that three of the writers considered in this chapter, P. D. James, Ruth Rendell and John Le Carré, have written non-genre fiction as well as detective fiction and especially interesting that P. D. James and Ruth Rendell carry over several of the conventions of detective novels into them, while addressing similar social issues in both kinds of fiction.

Within the stream of detective fiction there are writers who use realism, depth-psychology portraits of characters, and contemporary political and social issues to make their stories more "authentic" responses to the world around them. Barthes suggests in the essay, "Structural Analysis of Narratives," that one of the main differences between "popular" fiction and "serious" fiction is that the former is "predominantly functional" while the latter are "heavily indical;" that is, in

"popular" fiction, authors are interested only in making the plot move on, ignoring other subtleties while in "serious" fiction, authors are interested in psychological "data regarding [the character's] identity, notations of 'atmosphere,' and so on." (92) However, in several of the successful thriller writers, we see an attempt to combine the "functional" or "indicial" aspect with themes usually associated with "serious" fiction. Eco, in his essay on Ian Fleming, suggests that Fleming is a more literarily conscious writer than most people give him credit for (Eco 224). The examples he cites include a lengthy piece about diamond smuggling in South Africa. This information is really irrelevant to the plot, yet Eco claims that Fleming must have carefully researched the topic to include it in Diamonds are Forever. Eco also points out that contrary to the claim of Adorno and Horkheimer that "the style of the culture industry. . .is also the negation of style," (129) Fleming does have a distinct literary style of his own which he is careful to polish. Thus, even in the most archetypal spy novel, everything is not merely "functional."

In fact, many writers try to increase the "literariness" of detective fiction, as Collins argues in Uncommon Cultures. The large numbers of bodies found in libraries is, according to Collins, a reflection of the privileging of scholarship. This is also reinforced in the common practice of making literary allusions to established "classic" authors, especially to Shakespeare. Collins interprets this as an attempt by detective fiction to establish itself within the mainstream of literature.

This claim may not be as far-fetched as it seems. In Dublin's Joyce Kenner suggests in the chapter "Baker Street to Eccles Street" that the difference between Ulysses and the Sherlock Holmes saga is not as wide as it appears. The attitudes popularized by Arthur Conan Doyle are, he shows, similar to those found in Ulysses. What Kenner suggests is that in every period, there are themes, concepts or concerns that are so important that both "popular" and "serious" fiction deal with them.

In recent years the women's rights movement has had quite an impact on detective fiction. Though novels by women detective fiction writers have always been popular, one of the things that has changed over the last forty years is the female detective. Miss Marple, the old spinster created by Agatha Christie, was a "gentlewoman" who would never dream of taking money for her services. Her powers of deduction were usually based on intuition and a "feminine" kind of observation of detail. Although Miss Marple would succeed where the male police officers failed, her deduction was based on village anecdotes, her instinctive knowledge of character, and her domestic experiences. She is very different from P.D. James' Cordelia Gray, who is the sole owner of a private detective agency. Gray is extremely independent, efficient, well-read, and courageous. Although the first Cordelia Gray novel is called An Unsuitable Job for a Woman, she shows that she can do everything a man can and perhaps do it better.

P.D. James' novels are extremely literary. In fact her other detective, Adam Dalgliesh of Scotland Yard, is also a well-published poet. Literary

allusions and motifs are an integral part of the plots, especially in Skull Beneath the Skin, which is centered on a private performance of Webster's Duchess of Malfi and includes quotes from Webster, Marlowe and Shakespeare which are sent as threatening anonymous notes.

One of Adam Dalgliesh's axioms is that to solve the murder, one should know the victim as thoroughly as possible and the bulk of P.D. James' novels concentrate on Dalgliesh's or Gray's attempt to understand the victim. This attempt changes the novel from a who-dun-it to a search for understanding character, gathering others' perceptions of the victim, gaining insights into how the past shapes the future, and so on. In An Unsuitable Job for a Woman for example, Gray is hired by Sir Ronald Callender to find out why his son, Mark, committed suicide. Gray soon finds herself identifying with Mark as she tries to reconstruct Mark's life and eventually it is her knowledge of his character that leads her to suspect that Mark was actually murdered. Her investigation brings her into contact with a wide range of people, from Mark's friends at Cambridge to the senile Dr. Gladwin to members of Sir Callender's scientific circles. James always gives us complete background information about even the most irrelevant characters, which creates an illusion of a vast world peopled by real characters. This illusion is often bolstered by having characters from previous novels appear in later ones, like Deborah Riscoe, or by having epilogues set months or even years later. The often unconventional endings too disrupt the usual expectations of a detective novel. In several of her novels, including this one, the murderer is

not punished by the law, but dies in an accident or commits suicide. In this novel, Gray actually participates in covering up the murder of Sir Ronald because she feels he deserves to die. However, the killer Miss Leaming, his mistress and Mark's mother, eludes Dalgliesh only to die in a car accident. This divine retribution is, of course, too pat for comfort, but acknowledges a law different from that enforced by Dalgliesh and Scotland Yard.

However, when P.D. James transfers all these characteristics to the only non-detective novel she has written, Innocent Blood, the novel fails. The literariness becomes oppressive, the characters are not complex enough to support the themes of Phillipa's search for identity and the Scases' psychological need for revenge. It seems that the components of a successful detective story cannot be transferred wholesale into mainstream fiction.

While P.D. James does modernize the female detective and make the other characters more complex than is usual in detective novels, she basically works within the established tradition of detective fiction and does not question the required conventions of the genre. Critics like Gidez have identified her novels as heirs to the later novels of Dorothy Sayers. Even the intertextual references in her novels that Collins writes about are not the critical, disruptive exploitations of intertextuality found in postmodern novels. Rather, they serve only to emphasize the lineage of detective fiction and at most, as Collins claims, to establish the novels as the legitimate heir to British cultural traditions; but even this claim seems too pretentious for a novel like Skull Beneath the Skin.

One other difference from average mainstream detective novels is that James' novels usually end on a very depressing note. Although the murderer is suitably punished, the detectives are often repelled by the secrets they discover in the course of their investigations. In A Shroud for a Nightingale for instance, Dalgliesh obviously admires the murderer, Matron Mary Taylor, who is beautiful, efficient and intelligent, and feels a kinship with her. She too understands Dalgliesh and when she realizes that he will not accept a false confession and end his investigation, she taunts him by saying that without his job Dalgliesh would be "[v]ulnerable like the rest of us. You might even have to begin living and feeling like a human being." (290) This accentuates Dalgliesh's brooding about his function and usefulness. Even at the end, he does not feel triumphant at having successfully resolved the case. In short, these novels do not end with the "sweetness and light" (Palmer 65) of most thrillers, while they are so obviously in the mainstream, that they cannot be classified as "negative thrillers" either. The return to normalcy, a necessary trait of thrillers, is undermined by the sense that the normalcy is far from ideal and too fragile to last very long.

Ruth Rendell does not use a female detective, yet issues of women's rights and responsibilities enter into several of her novels. Usually there is a crisis in the household of Wexford (her detective) which is tenuously connected to the main plot. In A Sleeping Life, for example, the Wexfords' eldest daughter comes home with her children because she is having problems with her husband. It seems that Sylvia feels burdened by housekeeping and looking after her two

children and wants to train for a job, while her husband expects her to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother first. This debate is continued throughout the novel without much sympathy being shown for Sylvia. Eventually Sylvia goes back to her husband who agrees to let her work towards a degree the following year; however, she realizes through this experience that she cannot live without Neil. Dora, the Inspector's wife, is a typical motherly wife who soothes the Inspector when he comes home tired. While she is often impatient with Sylvia, she surprises Wexford by proving to be somewhat sympathetic towards her demands.

Yet the main plot also touches on issues like being female in a patriarchal society. The murdered woman is ultimately found to have been passing herself off as a male writer. Her lack of beauty and feminity, as well as her father's brutal treatment of her mother are offered as reasons for Rhoda's need to act as a man. Though she was intelligent and did well at school, her father refused to pay for college because she was a daughter. Wexford speculates that dressing as a man gave her the freedom to wander alone at night, "hobnob with men in bars on an equal footing." (172) He also talks of the differing standards set for aging men and women. Thus, while Wexford seems unsympathetic to Sylvia's distress, the plot of the story and Wexford's analysis at the end seem to justify the pamphlets on women's rights that Sylvia insisted on reading to her parents.

Another novel where the feminist movement enters directly into the plot is Rendell's An Unkindness of Ravens. The murdered man is found to be a bigamist and suspected child abuser. The daughters of Rodney Williams' two

families kill him because they learn of his treachery through a friendship formed in ARRIAS, a militant feminist group of adolescent girls. The plot allows the introduction of a wide range of female characters--from the rebellious and "aptly named" Eve Freeborn to the ultra-feminine Wendy, one of Rodney Williams' wives, to Joy, the other unattractive, TV-addicted, abused wife. All these women comment directly or indirectly on their position in society. Wendy, for example, believes that it was because she worked that she could not keep Rodney faithful. She says, "I wasn't enough of a girl. I got too hard and independent and--and mature. I know I did" (152) as she warns her daughter to stay away from "women's lib."

In this novel too, the feminist group is initially presented as rather ludicrous. The young girls are extremely naive, yet dangerous as they discuss including an initiation rite of killing a man, any man, to prove themselves worthy feminists. Also, it appears at first that this group is somehow responsible for triggering the murder. At the end, however, the motives for the murder turn out to be entirely mercenary, which vindicates the ARRIAS. As in A Sleeping Life, there are many comments or peripheral characters that emphasize the problems that women face in society. For example, Wexford remarks that in the average household, the daughter always gets a larger bedroom than the son because of the underlying, often unconscious, assumption that she will be more home-bound with less freedom to stay away from home. One of the subsidiary stories centers around Wexford's assistant, Burden's pregnant wife, Jenny. She is a vocal feminist

who manages to change even Burden's conservative views. However, when she found out that she was going to have a daughter, she began resenting her pregnancy and found that while logically she believed there was no difference between having a son or daughter, emotionally she felt that her years of motherhood would be futile because a girl was somehow less worthy. The novel follows, intermittently, her depression, visits to the psychologist, and ultimate acceptance of her pregnancy. These and many other incidents are absolutely irrelevant to the plot. Yet they all are little fragments that add up to make this detective story one that brings into focus problems of women's identity, their position in society, and the subtle ways in which men take advantage of their superior position, so that this novel is no less insightful on this topic than, say, Margaret Drabble's Realms of Gold.

The fact that Ruth Rendell also writes non-detective fiction is interesting. Her "serious" fiction also deals with the issues of women's position in society and the behavior demanded of them by social expectations. These books also usually include violent deaths, often murder. Yet these novels are not detective fiction. For example, The Bridesmaid is the story of an obsessive love affair. However, the mysteriously beautiful Senta is also psychologically unbalanced, as Philip finds out when Senta insists he kill a man, anyone, to prove his love for her. She promises to do the same and does. The novel does not directly focus on women's issues, but again the large range of different kinds of women and various relationships show these problems obliquely. For example, there is Philip's

widowed mother, who is helpless on her own and desperately needs to marry someone to have a social identity and do the only thing that she knows how to do well: be a good wife. Philip has two very different sisters; one a video-junkie, the other who craves for respectability through a handsome husband and a modern apartment with all the latest gadgets. In fact all of the women in the novel need to be defined by a relationship with a man, most obsessively Senta. The story does not revolve around the question who-dun-it, because we know the answer to that. Rather, the relationship between Philip and Senta is the focal point; yet the novel is published by The Mysterious Press, who publish exclusively detective stories. The same psychological exploration of characters is present in both the Wexford stories and the non-detective stories; the same issues dominate the novels and the line between the two types almost disappears. Rendell does not subvert the basic structure of the thriller in order to deal with women's issues, however. That is, the issues are not usually built into the plot structure in a way that challenges the basic assumptions of the genre, but are brought out through incidental characters, the comments of Wexford, and other devices. The basic framework of the novel remains conventional in that it conforms to the structure of the genre, which is generally seen as one promoting patriarchal values by privileging stability and male logic over emotion. Rendell does not actually challenge these base ideologies; rather, the superstructure of the novel, the plot and motive, are used to raise questions about the social conditions that give rise to murderous tendencies. While this particular murderer is caught and

presumably punished, the feeling remains that inequalities of social structures will soon instigate more crimes.

Another type of thriller tries to use the genre's device of revelations for a political purpose. This seems to be used more by Third World writers and filmmakers than by British and American ones. In Third World countries, the battlelines are usually sharp and the threat of CIA involvement is often a real fear. Hydra Heads by Carlos Fuentes is a typical thriller which shows the political power structure of a Third World economy where the links between big businesses, politicians and the CIA are ultimately revealed. Though popular culture is often an issue in Fuentes' works, Hydra Heads is a novel which uses the form uncritically, only substituting the usual battlelines for alignments that fit his anti-imperialist ideology.

Films like Z by Costra Gavras used the suspense thriller type of plot to uncover the CIA involvement and cover-up of the assassination of a populist president. In India too, several films with political messages utilize this form. Films like Grihajuddhya (Civil War) or New Delhi Times show how big businesses murder popular trade union leaders or politicians and try to cover up the act by bribing policemen and intimidating journalists. These films too take advantage of the promise of the form to reveal the "truth" about events the public reads about in the newspapers. Only the thriller, these films claim, can offer the public true knowlegde about the events behind the scenes.

The British novel that comes closest to propagating this kind of political statement is Dogs of War by Fredrick Forsyth. Though its basic characteristics are true to formula--the brave handsome hero, the use of suspense, extremely detailed descriptions of weaponry, the "knowledgeable" descriptions of how to secure blackmarket arms supplies and so on--the plot is somewhat different. In the novel, James Manson, the unscrupulous head of the Manson Corporation, finances a coup in Zangaro, a poor West African nation, to place a puppet dictator in power who will give ManCon the exclusive rights to mine a rich platinum source in his country. The bulk of the novel details the planning of Cat Shannon, the Irish mercenary, and his setting up of the coup. The twist comes at the end when Shannon double-crosses ManCon Corporations to set a truly nationalist African leader in power, instead of the corrupt tyrant Colonel Bobi as demanded by Manson. Obviously, the plot portrays James Manson as an extremely greedy man who stops at nothing to make a profit. Even Manson's daughter is spoilt, almost degenerate. On the other hand, Shannon is the typical heroic character, fond of fighting, disdainful of those who hold ordinary jobs and lead ordinary lives. Though the plot is anti-imperialist in the sense that the disapproval of Manson's interference is clear, the novel seems to be ambiguous about the wisdom of granting countries like Zangaro independence in the first place. The history of Zangaro is presented as follows:

> Six years earlier the colonial power ruling the enclave now called Zangaro, increasingly conscious of world opinion had decided to grant independence. Overhasty preparations were made among a population wholly inexperienced in self-government, and a general

> election and independence were fixed for the following year. . . The colonial power had made a mess of it. Instead of taking a leaf from the French book and ensuring that the colonial protege won the first, vital election and then signed a mutual defense treaty to ensure that a company of white paratroopers kept the pro-Western president in power in perpetuity, the colonials had allowed their worst enemy to win. (69-70)

The passage seems to support the concept of the "white man's burden." This attitude is found throughout the novel. The Africans are invariably cowardly, lazy, corrupt and ignorant. "[T]he Egyptians, who had a horror of flying at night" had to be replaced by East German pilots. Shannon's entire plan of attack is based on

> three facts about war in Africa that he had learned the hard way. One is that the European soldier fights well and with precision in the dark, provided he has been well-briefed on the terrain he can expect, while the African soldier, even on his own terrain, is sometimes reduced to near helplessness by his fear of the hidden enemy in the surrounding darkness. The second is that the speed of recovery of the disoriented African soldier--his ability to regroup and counter-attack--is slower than the European soldier's, exaggerating the normal effects of surprise. The third is that firepower and hence noise can bring African soldiers to fear, panic and headlong flight, without consideration of the smallness of the actual numbers of their opponents. (124)

Shannon's strategy works and the only resistance offered in the fight is by a Soviet security guard who manages to kill Tiny Marc Vlaminck and wound Shannon slightly. Of course most of the Zangarans are too ignorant even to load their guns, which they prefer to use as clubs. Shannon's visit to Zangaro emphasizes all of these characteristics. His passport is stamped by an illiterate official. His bag is searched at the customs desk and all his money is taken from him. Shannon knows from past experience that it is useless to protest "the blank-

eyed sense of menace conveyed by an African of almost primeval cultural level, armed with a weapon, in a state of power--wholly unpredictable, with reactions to a situation that were utterly illogical, ticking away like a moving time bomb." (99) Shannon learns the most from Jules Gomez, the Spanish manager of Independence Hotel; there is of course an immediate friendship between the two Europeans.

The only exception to these generalizations is the unnamed African to whom Shannon transfers political power in defiance of orders from ManCon. We meet him at the beginning of the novel when Shannon and other mercenaries are leaving a lost war. They were fighting for this African on contract. A South African white mercenary flies in at enormous risk to himself and in face of political repercussions to fly out this African leader, not for money, but because "This one was different." (5) This difference is brought out by the fact that this white South African does, instinctively, what he had never done to a black man before--he calls him 'sir' and inclines his head in respect. We are not given any reason for the African's ability to generate this respect; the only description we get tells us that "His voice was deep and slow, the accent more like that of an English public-school man, which he was, than like an African." (4)

We meet some of his associates at the end of the novel when Shannon takes a team with him to Zangaro. The six assistants to the mercenaries are obedient, quiet and unintelligent. They take their orders and have no questions to ask. "Each would stick close to the mercenary who would lead him and trust

that he knew what he was doing." (336) After the meeting, they go to sleep and even this "ability to sleep at any time, in any place, in almost any circumstances" (336) seems to be another "primeval" characteristic. The seventh person, an Oxford PhD., the representative of the leader, is just as docile and deferent as the other six. In the battle, one of the Africans tries to act with initiative, but even that backfires. Timothy, the assistant to the mercenary Dupree, catches a grenade thrown by a Zangaran and realizes that the pin had not been removed, so he removes the pin and hurls it back at the enemy. Unfortunately, Dupree runs right into it and dies. This is the only action in the battle that is not in response to direct orders from the mercenaries.

Yet the novel is supposed to be criticizing exactly these patronizing racial attitudes. At the end, Shannon explains to a bewildered Endean why he acted as he did. He tells Endean, Manson's right hand man,

> You made two mistakes. . . You assumed that because I'm a mercenary, I'm automatically stupid. It never seemed to occur to you that we are both mercenaries, along with Sir James Manson and most of the people who have power in this world. The second mistake was that you assumed all black people were the same, because to you they look the same. (363)

Shannon also makes a strong anti-imperialist or anti-multinational-corporation speech to Endean which justifies his actions. He says,

> For nearly two years. . . I watched between half a million and a million small kids starved to death because of people like you and Manson. It was done basically so that you and your kind could make bigger profits through a vicious and totally corrupt dictatorship and it was done in the name of law and order, of legality and constitutional justification. I may be a fighter, I may be a killer, but

> I am not a bloody sadist. I worked out for myself how it was done and why it was done, and who were the men behind it. Visible up front were a bunch of politicians and Foreign Office men, but they are just a cage full of posturing apes, neither seeing nor caring past their interdepartmental squabbles and their re-election. Invisible behind them were profiteers like your precious James Manson. That's why I did it. (365)

This speech establishes Shannon as superior morally to Manson and his group. Manson sees the African people and their nation merely as objects to be manipulated for his profit. He also manipulates the original surveyor and scientist who know the true value of the platinum. Like all villains in thrillers, he does not see others as human beings. Even his attitude towards his daughter shows his inability to understand or empathize with others. His assistants, Endean and Thorpe, also see the Africans as objects to be manipulated. Shannon on the other hand proves his concern for other human beings, though only for those he approves of. He talks of the starving millions and he makes sure that the friends and family of the mercenaries killed in the battle are well-cared for. Although he is a mercenary, the contrast with the psychopathic mercenary Roux and others establishes him as being somehow different from the rest.

Shannon is, in the terms of the novel, unequivocally good, though from other perspectives this may seem problematic. Though he kills quite a few people, he is, like all good heroes, always provoked, never the aggressor--except, of course, in battle where everything is permissible. He demands loyalty from his group even if it has to be bought, and gets it, even though he himself betrays his employers. He is innovative enough to change the original plan without anyone

realizing that he is cheating his employer. His casual treatment of Manson's daughter proves he can be as oblivious to emotional suffering as Manson. Yet, as Collins points out, the detective novel often sets up a value-system opposed to laws in the real world and justifies unlawful acts on the ground that there is a higher moral code than that enforced by the existing laws. Here Manson, we are told often, is a true representative of the British economic system. If he is able to bypass the existing judicial system to fulfill his desires, then obviously a different set of rules is required to stop him. We are told in great detail about his financial manipulations--the creation of fictional stockholders, the use of discreet Swiss banks and other devices. This is where Shannon, equally disrespectful of the law, can thwart him. Shannon recognizes his similarity to Manson and explains this in detail to Julie Manson in terms that are familiar to many thrillers.

> There are only two kinds of people in this world: the predators and the grazers. And the predators always get to the top, because they're prepared to fight to get there and consume people and things that get in their way. (184)

This sentiment is common to most thrillers; detectives like Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op, James Bond and even Smiley see themselves as people who are forced into ruthless and lawless acts to ensure the peace and stability of the average man. In this long speech, Shannon tells Julie that the businessmen control the politicians who begin wars to control the economy--"Those GIs in Vietnam. . .die for the Dow Jones Index" (184), but being "predators" themselves, Shannon and other mercenaries are not controlled by the Establishment; "We don't shoot the ones they tell us to shoot, and we don't start when they say 'Start',

or stop when they say 'Stop'. That's why we're outlaws." (184-5) Also, like other heroes, Shannon despises the 'normal' lifestyle. As Palmer points out, without a job to do, or a crisis to defuse, Philip Marlowe, James Bond and others are at loose ends. They are unable to live normal lives. Shannon expresses this sentiment too.

> I could live on, like a battery hen, in one of these futile cities filling in futile forms, paying futile taxes to enable futile politicians and state managers to fritter it away on electorally useful white elephants. I could earn a futile salary in a futile office and commute futilely on a train, morning and evening, until a futile retirement. I prefer to do it my way.
> (186)

According to Shannon, it was the war in Cyprus that made him a true mercenary, that is a mercenary with a political consciousness. Others who merely fight for money, he labels 'bums'. As Palmer points out, the hero and the villain often share common characteristics. It is however rare to have a four-page speech which explains these philosophies so bluntly.

In this novel, Shannon succeeds in putting right some of the injustices that the Zangarans have suffered, yet at the end of the novel, we see ManCon momentarily thwarted, but not destroyed. The sociopolitical system that Shannon lashes out against is still intact. There is even an absence of the "big bang" ending that Palmer suggests is necessary for the feeling that the villains have been suitably and extravagantly punished. (65) Once again, though this is a conventional thriller, the "sweetness and light" at the end is extremely illusionary

because the systems that produce the evil of economic imperialism remain untouched, though momentarily stalled.

The writer who brought literary respectability to the spy-thriller was Le Carré. The first few novels were well-written though conventional thrillers. Le Carré's innovations were first tried out in Quest for Karla, a trilogy consisting of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, The Honourable Schoolboy, and Smiley's People, a complex story of the rivalry between Smiley of British Intelligence and his counterpart in the KGB, Karla.

The discovery of the Soviet moles within British Intelligence in the sixties had a major impact on British writers. What made the betrayal so difficult to accept was the fact that Philby and the others had such impeccable backgrounds--Oxbridge Universities, the "right family" and so on. Several spy novels of the time were concerned with the act of betrayal, including Greene's The Human Factor. In their own ways, these novels tried to understand and come to terms with the reasons for the betrayal. Le Carré, like Greene, tried to understand the betrayals in terms of personalities. Le Carré's character, Hayden, is his Philby character, the brilliant, charismatic officer who rose to head the "Circus." Ultimately, only Smiley, the drab, unassuming agent, could see through Hayden's charm and efficiency and identify him as the "mole." However, the political betrayal is compounded by Smiley's wife's affair with Hayden and this, for Smiley, is even more difficult to accept than Hayden's political treachery.

Smiley's quest for Karla also revolves around a combination of political and personal issues. Smiley often feels closer to Karla than to the men and women of his own service because he feels he and Karla are really alike and have the same goals, the same concerns, but just happen to be on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain. Eventually, Smiley can neutralize Karla only through personal ties. He exploits Karla's only weakness, his daughter's psychological problems, to remove him from the KGB.

The other characters in the novels too are explored in-depth. The role of their educational and social backgrounds is stressed. These provide the motivation for their actions and beliefs which are unique and individual. Some characters like Connie, the expert on Soviet affairs, are presented almost surrealistically. Her mind wanders through all the information she has garnered until it makes the right connections intuitively. This knowledge and ability are her only source of power and comfort, as she is an old spinster living alone in Cambridge.

In Little Drummer Girl Le Carré explores the whole issue of identity formation as the novel follows the central character, Charlie. She is, in the novel, given a false identity which is recreated in tremendous detail. Eventually, she begins to confuse her own past with that of the false character and finds that her emotions and thoughts are reflecting those of the imaginary character. She can no longer distinguish her real consciousness from the role she is playing.

All of these concerns are the main themes of A Perfect Spy, the story of Magnus Pym. The novel begins with his disappearance from his home when he hears of his father's death, which "sets him free." We know that he is holed up as a paying guest at Mrs. Dabb's, a place he calls his sanctuary. From the internal monologue of Mary, his wife, we soon learn of Magnus' overwhelming need to be "perfect." Mary describes their parties as a series of role-playings for him: acting like a "Balkan gigolo" while helping her dress, an Austrian train conductor to amuse their guests, being the perfect diplomat and the perfect husband. All of this is a result of a need to be loved and admired by all. Of course, that desire led him to be a double agent working for Axel, the Czech, who, like Brotherhood, his mentor in the British Intelligence, was a father-figure for Pym. Axel taught Pym about literature and philosophy and enjoying life. Brotherhood, on the other hand, represented all the positive qualities of the English gentleman war hero that Pym strove to be. Pym always recreated himself as the situation demanded, so he constantly presented himself through a series of fictions ranging from the man of the world to the serious, innocent Englishman scholar in Berne where he first met Axel and Brotherhood. However, Axel always seemed to view Pym skeptically, whereas Brotherhood, even till the end, swallows the myths created by Pym. When presented with Grant Lederer's computer printouts collating Pym's movements with transmissions from the Czech embassy, Brotherhood staunchly defends his most valuable protege, without suspecting that Pym's value is based on the false network of agents created by Axel for Pym.

Yet this political double-crossing is only one of the complex parts of the illusions that Pym compulsively created. On personal levels too he had to become what was expected or desired of him by others. The root of his desire is shown to be Pym's wish to live up to his father's expectations of him. Pym's father, Rick, was a con man by profession who taught Pym the importance of role-playing at a very early age.

However, this trait of illusion creation is not seen as totally negative. Because Pym partially believed in the fictions he created, he usually gave value for money. To Mary, his second wife, he was the perfect husband, loving and considerate, never showing any irritation or imposing his ideas on her. To Kate, the spinster at Whitehall, he was the perfect discreet lover. To Brotherhood Pym was the son he never had. Each role was played to perfection. In fact, Lederer, the CIA agent who was the first to notice the patterns in Pym's movements, is presented as rather a repulsive character. At the end, despite his desperate bid for the approval and attention of Headquarters, he is transferred to a desk job in Statistics that he hates, almost as a punishment, it seems, for exposing Pym.

The novel is an attempt to understand Pym and his motives. On one level the novel follows Brotherhood's search for Pym through the painstaking interviews of Sefton Boyd, Syd Lemon, Belinda, piecing together the disjointed bits of information provided by Kate, Lederer and others. This search is the typical pursuit of spy thrillers. Brotherhood's search is similar to Smiley's search for Hayden, but in this novel two other narratives are intertwined. One is the "novel"

that Pym is writing; a kind of justification of his life for Tom, his teenage son and a narrative through which we, the readers, get to understand Pym and especially his relationship with his father. The other follows Mary as she deceives British Intelligence to meet Axel in her own attempt to help Pym.

In Le Carré's terms, the title A Perfect Spy is a contradiction. Throughout his novels we find that all of the characters are flawed, lonely, incomplete people. Smiley has to lose Ann, his wife. Lacon's apparently tranquil family life disintegrates. Connie is an old lonely spinster. It is fitting that only the most flawed character can be the perfect spy.

Though Le Carré's novels are much more complex than the average spy-thriller in terms of plot, characterization and theme, he conforms to the conventional ideologies of the genre. On the "superficial" level, though he continuously draws parallels between the KGB and British Intelligence and their leaders like Smiley and Karla, the scales are tipped in favor of the British. Though their careers are remarkably similar, the methods and characters of the two men are different. The picture built up over the novels proves that the Kremlin will use thugs to intimidate their adversaries, even if they are civilians; the KGB kills indiscriminately; their officials are corrupt, exploiting their official privileges; and Karla is successful mainly because he seems to have no emotional feelings for anyone or anything. On the other hand the Circus only kills when it has to and with an uneasy conscience. It tries to help Soviet individuals like Ostrakova in Smiley's People. Smiley agonizes over decisions and is presented to

us as a more sympathetic character than Karla. Though the CIA, The Circus and the KGB are all incompetent and uncaring, the KGB is the worst. If we compare the attitudes displayed in the novels towards Hayden and Karl or Mundt, the bias becomes even more obvious. Hayden is the Soviet mole in the Circus while Karl is a British agent in East Germany. While both are traitors to their country, the novel makes implicit judgements about the two. Karl is a traitor for the extra money that allows him to indulge in extravagances like his mistress, Elvira, yet when he is killed by the East Germans at the beginning of Spy who came in from the Cold, a sense of tragedy is carefully built up as Leamas recalls his good humor and vitality. Mundt is the British agent in the East German Intelligence and, like Hayden, he has risen to a position of trust and authority. Mundt is presented as a positive character while Hayden's sexual escapades with men, women and young girls show him as morally degenerate. He betrays his closest friend, Prideaux, as well as an entire network of agents. When discovered, he breaks down totally, whimpering and cringing. On the whole, he is despicable. Politically, therefore, Le Carré's novels display the same attitudes as Fleming's--they affirm the superiority of British Intelligence and its people.

In terms of the "deep structure" ideology, too, Le Carré, though definitely more complex than most thriller writers, also reinforces the claims of thrillers--that they are the real purveyors of truth which reveal the happenings hidden to all ordinary people, and uphold a value-system where information is the most valuable commodity. Thus, Smiley, though middle-aged and dumpy, can be a hero

because he knows and understands the most. In A Perfect Spy the sense that the reader is being given the most complete knowledge is reinforced by the triple narrative of the story. Only we, the readers, can simultaneously follow the story of Pym's childhood and adolescence, Brotherhood's hunt and British Intelligence's attempt at a cover-up as well as Mary's personal quest to help Pym. While Le Carré often stretches the definition of the thriller, he never seriously challenges its political and structural ideology. Novels like these challenge the concept that all thrillers promote the same conservative notions of stability and support the existing social hierarchy. However, these novels discuss some of the socio-political concerns of contemporary society by exploiting the genre's structure and working within the conventions of thriller fiction.

In Genres in Discourse, Todorov divides all narratives into two categories--the mythological and the gnoseological. The main distinction between the two types is, according to him, the complexity of the relation between the events that are narrated. In the mythological type of narrative, the events are combined mainly with the logic of succession. In the gnoseological or epistemical narrative the logic of succession is "supported by a second sort of transformation. . . [The gnoseological are] narratives in which the event itself is less important than our perception of it, and degree of knowledge we have of it." (31) He goes on to say that

> the search for knowledge dominates another kind of narrative. . . the mystery, or detective story. We know such narratives are constituted by the problematic relation of two stories: the story of the crime, which is missing, and the story of the investigation, which

> is present, and whose only justification is to acquaint us with the other story. Some element of that first story is indeed made available from the beginning: a crime is committed almost before our eyes; but we have been unable to determine its real agents or motives. The investigation consists in returning over and over to the events, verifying and correcting the smallest details, until the truth about the initial story finally comes out; this is a story of learning. . . [W]hat characterizes knowledge in detective fiction is that it has only two possible values, true or false. In a detective story, either we know who committed the murder or we do not. (33)

In the novels considered in this chapter, this binary option exists; that is we are told the true facts eventually. However, the writers take advantage of the "second story," the story of the investigation, to reveal knowledge about not only the particular investigation, but about other social issues. Rendell, for example, uses Wexford and his comments to highlight issues of women's problems, while Le Carré uses the story of pursuit to explore the psychological complexities of Pym and other characters. That means that these writers keep the requirements of the genre intact, and only make use of its characteristics to extend the kind of knowledge they offer within the genre structure. In fact, these writers use the "second story" to extend the limitations of the genre in terms of subject matter. This technique only serves to bolster the claim of the genre that the thriller is ideologically flexible and can embody any system of values without much adjustment. However, the fact that in all of these novels the complications are eventually resolved means that they do not undermine any of the fundamental requirements of the thriller. What they do is increase the range of topics that thrillers discuss.

For popular fiction to remain popular, it must make gestures towards the incorporation of the contemporary issues and values of society and these novels are reflecting some of the major social and political changes of present times. The issue of women's rights has been dealt with by Rendell and James, while the stories of Le Carré are a product of the political disillusionment of the late sixties. The almost immediate effect of political events on thrillers can be seen in the fact that one of Tom Clancy's latest novels, Clear and Present Danger, is set in Columbia and the villains are no longer the Soviets but the drug lords of that country. Also, a novel like Maze by Larry Collins differentiates between KGB Officals who are pro-Gorbachev and the hardliners in the bureaucracy and suggests that the religious riots between the Armenians and the Azerbijanís were deliberately triggered by the anti-Gorbachev lobby who wanted him in trouble. Thrillers have been long been used by writers to highlight contemporary issues they feel are important without challenging the basic assumptions of the genre. The writers considered in this chapter have successfully broadened the scope of the thriller by utilizing the form in innovative ways, but they have been careful to adhere to the basic ideological implications of this genre--that it is a genre that reveals the truth.

CHAPTER 3

SUBSTITUTIONS OF VALUE SYSTEMS

One way of explaining the ideology of genres is suggested by Collins. In Uncommon Cultures he writes that in a world which offers a plethora of cultural choices a "legitimation crisis" arises which means that "texts must justify not a social class, but its ability to perform a particular function to fulfill a specific need within their culture." (2) This means that

> fictional texts become . . .doubly 'ideological' in that they vehiculate a particular political position, but also promote themselves as forms of discourse, generating their own set of distinctive values, sustaining their own stylistic uniqueness, constructing very particular subjects. (6)

The "particular political position" that texts present is, according to Collins, the "surface" ideology because now that "the means of production, distribution, and consumption all defy class orientations, correlations between class and genre begin to dissolve." (5) Therefore texts within a particular genre can privilege various systems of value without undermining the "deep" ideology that the genre tries to project about itself. This implies, as one example, that the detective novel can uphold both the masculine, rational forms of thinking found in Conan Doyle, and the more intuitive, "feminine" methods of knowledge-gathering like that found in Gwendoline Butler. Or that the spy novel can, on the one hand, say all Russian

spies are evil as in Ian Fleming's novels, but can also be more ambiguous as in Le Carré's novel The Russia House, where the Americans are as evil as the KGB, if not more so.

The ideology of the "deep" structure of the thriller genre is one that "depends upon an elaborate value transformation in which a new economy emerges that privileges a different object of exchange--information." (Collins 36) The detective or the spy is only successful if he can gather and collate information about the murderer or enemy Intelligence; therefore this information is valuable, often in monetary terms.

However, I think that this privileging is not confined to the boundaries of the text. Part of the appeal of the thriller is the fulfillment of its promise to share that valuable information with the reader. The reader is led to feel privileged because s/he can, with the detective, unmask the most innocent-seeming person as the murderer, or can share the knowledge of intrigues with the spy and thereby comprehend the forces which manipulate real political events that s/he reads about in the paper.

In fact, the common strategy of using real-life situations as background material for many thrillers seems to be a way of enhancing our sense of being let in on secrets. This would also explain the large number of novels that use actual or imaginary "newspaper headlines" as part of the story. Usually the novels, like Tom Clancy's The Hunt for Red October go on to show the "real" story behind the headlines that was supposedly suppressed for security concerns.

Even the fact that the language of thrillers differs from what the reader would normally encounter enhances our sense of being allowed to look into a world usually hidden. Collins shows the thrillers' extreme dependence on slang and jargon supposedly particular to these criminal or espionage worlds. Writers like Tom Clancy use pseudo-technical language to heighten the illusion that they are presenting the 'truth.' As long as thrillers do not question the genre's ability to transmit the truth, variations within particular stories can be integrated without disruption of the form.

However, there are a few other beliefs that are built into the form. One of the most basic is the implied ideology of individualism. This is most obvious in spy novels where, though there is an organization backing the hero, he soon loses contact with headquarters and has to confront the enemy alone. Similarly, even if the detective is a member of the police force, the character is usually individualized by quirks of personality that try to establish him as an individual who is the only person capable of solving the mystery. He is often shown as surrounded by intelligent and capable police officers, yet our hero is the only person who can actually win the contest.

Yet this competitive individualism can have negative consequences, as is manifested in the fact that hardly any of the fictional spies and detectives have any meaningful relationships with other people. Very few are married or have any life outside their profession. Even personal relationships are seen as being part of the competition. James Bond, for example, often wins over female spies

from the enemy, as in Goldfinger or Casino Royale. His relationships with women become just another manifestation of his superiority.

Part of the reason for the success of the hero in overcoming his enemies is his ability to learn from the environment and adapt his skills to fit the need. In contrast the villain is usually inflexible, what Palmer calls "bureaucratic" in his approach. Of course this is an off-shoot of the earlier point because a successful competitor must learn to make use of whatever means are at hand if he wishes to win, and he must be individualistic enough and have enough imagination and competence to overcome obstacles.

Another common feature of thrillers is the attitude of the central characters towards other people. Often the hero, detective or spy, is pitting himself against a villain who cannot see other people as individuals. Instead he sees them as objects to be manipulated for profit or power and, if necessary, these people may be eliminated once their usefulness has been served. The hero must be more humane and never instigate violence; he must be forced into using his powers. The usual thrillers, like those of Fleming, utilize these structural constraints to present extremely conservative and jingoistic ideas, but within these guidelines, the thriller is flexible enough to accommodate several varying beliefs.

Three writers, Ambler, Greene and Fowles, stand out as novelists who perhaps instinctively realized the strength of the claim of the thriller to reveal the "truth" that would otherwise remain hidden and tried to utilize the conventions of the thriller to disseminate political and moral ideologies directly opposed to that

embodied in the structure of the conventional thriller. Though Fowles has done this only once, in his first novel The Collector, Ambler and Greene apparently found this textual strategy of utilizing the form fruitful as both have a number of novels in this mode spanning over 40 years each. They all consciously try to empty the form of the thriller of its original political and moral implications to replace them with ideologies they believe in; all are committed writers with a crusade. Palmer writes, "The basic apparatus of the thriller can accommodate more or less any set of political beliefs, precisely because they constitute only a superficial layer." (67) These three novelists exploit this "porous" characteristic of the thriller.

Dashiell Hammett and Eric Ambler were probably the first writers to use the thriller form to present a leftist political point of view. Both of them took the Marxist approach of showing the workings of the economic structure as reflected in the superstructure. For Ambler, a pacifist Marxist caught up in World War II, the best way to reveal the futility of the war was to show it as an imperialistic war instigated by the big business and arms manufacturing corporations.

In A Cause for Alarm, which is typical of his spy-novels, Ambler takes almost all of the thriller's usual political alignments and inverts them. For example, the basic plot of the novel, set just before World War II, is based on an attempt to unbalance the Rome-Berlin Axis by creating suspicions between the two countries. The unlikely allies in this task are Zaleshoff, a Soviet spy, his sister Tamara, and the hero, an Englishman working in Milan, Marlow.

The most obvious breach of conventional spy-novel ideology is the character Zaleshoff. Ambler takes care to make Zaleshoff the most likeable and admirable character in the novel. He is presented as charming, articulate, caring and committed to the idea of peace. In case we miss the point, we are told several times in the novel by Marlow "you couldn't help liking Zaleshoff." The scenes in Zaleshoff's home portray a curiously domestic setting with the two men discussing strategy after a good meal of goulash, and Tamara busily sewing in the background. Like all successful fictional spies, Zaleshoff is innovative and can endure physical hardship well. He and Marlow successfully disguise themselves as Italian peasants, railroad workers and business men over a period of two days. Yet Zaleshoff's taste in liquor and clothes prove his sophistication. In other words, Zaleshoff has all the characteristics of the archetypical spy, only he is a Soviet agent.

However, he is only a support for the focal character, Marlow, an almost stereotypical Englishman. Marlow is good at his work, but does not know or care much about politics. Sent to Milan to head the Italian branch of a British arms manufacturing company, he repeatedly says that this arrangement, which indirectly helps the Rome-Berlin Axis, is not unacceptable to him because it is merely a matter of business. As in many of his novels, Ambler suggests that the big businesses always place profit above patriotism or peace and that wars are usually imperialist profit-making ventures. Marlow is in Milan in the first place because he has been laid-off by the company he used to work for and he finds it

impossible to find a job in England because of a severe recession. The Spartacus Company, on the other hand, seems to be doing well because it is supplying arms to an enemy country. Eventually, Marlow agrees to team up with Zaleshoff mainly because Vagas, the sinister representative of Germany, had wounded his ego with melodramatic threats, not from a sense of patriotism or idealism. He is very naive about such moral choices and in his dealings with people.

While Ambler takes pains to present good characters like Marlow realistically, the bad characters are all caricatures. General Vagas, with his painted, pockmarked face and curious mannerisms, his grotesque villa and servant, is melodramatically sinister. Yet Marlow, who had initially dismissed him, is made to feel Vagas' power and shrewdness. Similarly, the ingratiating Bellinetti, the Italian Fascist working at Marlow's office, seems to represent Italy's and Mussolini's relationship with Germany. These characters follow the logic of spy-novels: as the twisted, distorted characters they are representative of the unnatural forms of political organization they work for; but while it is usually Russia thus represented, here these characters represent the character of Fascism.

The first meeting between Vagas and Marlow is meant to orient the reader's reaction toward Vagas. He is immediately set apart from the characters described so far. He greets Marlow with a smile but "his lips twisted, with what was evidently intended to be a polite smile. But the smile did not reach his eyes. Dark and small and cautious, they flickered appraisingly from my [Marlow's] head to my feet." (46) He has "fat, delicate fingers" but soon Marlow notices with "a

shock that the patches of colour just below his cheekbones were rouge. I could see, too, on the jaw line just below his ear the edge of a heavy and clumsily applied maquillage" (47) and his gestures are curiously effeminate. The description of his villa merely reinforces this initial image--the red velvet wall hangings, baroque furniture, paintings from Leilah and Mejnoun reflect the grotesqueness of Vagas' political leanings. He expounds his love for the ballet and explains that he sees it as a death ritual and its resurgence means that society is getting ready for war and death; everything, even the beauty of Swan Lake, is thus twisted by Vagas.

Yet these are not random attempts to make the enemy seem ridiculous. As Palmer suggests, the villains are presented this way with a purpose. Villains have to be dehumanized to maximize the threat that they pose to society and to justify the extravagant punishment meted out to them. It is as if Ambler's repugnance for Fascism is reflected in Vagas. Like some of the great villains such as Fleming's Blofeld, Vagas is a citizen of no particular country, fluent in many languages, cruel in his dealings with those around him who are dependent on him, like his wife and servant.

Yet, while Ambler retains some of the basic characteristics of the typical spy-novel, he undermines the usual "superficial" political implications both overtly and otherwise. Marlow and an agent of the Stalinist Soviet Union do make an unlikely team, but Zaleshoff is not the only representative of socialism; there is Hallett, Marlow's co-worker before they both got laid off, "a blank-dash Socialist."

He is, in Marlow's eyes, too cynical about their employers and the way they run the economy. Yet throughout the novel, we are not allowed to forget Hallett and his views. As Marlow gradually loses some of his naivete, he remembers Hallett's words on the subject.

Another more striking concretization of the slogan "Workers of the world unite" is the incident where Marlow and Zaleshoff are caught as vagabonds in Brescia in the chapter appropriately entitled "Hammer and Sickle." They are placed in the custody of two guards, since their real identity is still unknown to their captors. Zaleshoff uses his knowledge of the history of the Communist movement in Italy to establish a rapport with one of the guards so that they can escape. Ideologically, this is an opportunity for Ambler to appreciate the heroism of the Communists in Italy and reveal to the reader the harshness with which Fascist Italy crushed the movement.

At the end, of course, Zaleshoff and Marlow prevail. Zaleshoff returns in other novels by Ambler, while Marlow returns to England to marry his fiancee and, presumably, live happily ever after. The villains are suitably punished with death or imprisonment and the Rome-Berlin Axis is given a little jolt by the creation of a sense of mutual distrust between the allies. So it seems that Ambler is basically inverting the politics of the spy-thriller by realigning the characters. The question is, is this inversion necessarily subversion of the "deep structure"?

The ideology of the thriller is usually seen as one of "competitive individualism" and, as Palmer writes, "the one political belief that the thriller

could not accommodate is anti-individualism." (67) Thrillers uphold the virtues of physical stamina, loyalty and honor and this novel seems to emphasize these same values while merely changing the allegiances of the groups involved. Palmer equates the competitive individualism of the thriller with values associated with capitalism. In this novel too we find Zaleshoff with all the qualities of a James Bond. Zaleshoff, perhaps as a result of being born in America, has the required level of sophistication. Though his apartment is partly furnished with packing cases, he spends money on good liquor. He can take lots of physical punishment without losing his good humor. He is innovative and resourceful--in short, he is just like any good Western agent. That means that Ambler is still upholding the capitalist values of innovative individualism rather than trying to formulate a new set of values specific to the socialism he espouses in the novel. Similarly, by dehumanizing the enemy, here German and Italian Fascism, Ambler is in a sense trivializing the threat or at least "demonizing" it.

Apart from the value systems, Ambler keeps other features of the thriller intact too. His plot structure is dependent on suspense and pursuit, tempered with the reassurance, typical of popular fiction, that the good guys will win in the end. The means of representation too is conventional; Ambler uses realistic strategies to capture the mood of Italy. Whereas Fleming shows places like Italy or Turkey as exotic, Ambler highlights the sordidness of these places to make his novels seem more realistic. Often, in this novel and others, England is presented

as a sane place far from the deceit and menace of Milan or Istanbul. Most of the characters are also presented realistically.

The use of realistic narrative techniques is essential to what Ambler is attempting--supposedly revealing a 'true' picture of the situation. Often his novels incorporate "newspaper reports" of the situation we have just read, but of course, the report is superficial while we, the privileged readers, know what actually happened. At the end of A Cause for Alarm there is a short article in a newspaper which implies that there has been a rift in the relationship between Germany and Italy. We, the readers, of course know exactly how that has come about. A similar sequence of unmasking is part of the plot structure of novels like The Intercom Conspiracy where the novel is presented as a compilation of interviews, reports etc., or The Mask of Dimitros where Latimer sets out to find out about an elusive criminal who has supposedly been found dead in Turkey. The use of Latimer in several novels is itself part of the attempt to emphasize the "reality" of Ambler's novels, because Latimer, a historian who writes detective novels for the money, finds out that "real life" is like neither the history that he studies nor the detective stories that he writes.

Thus, though Ambler does invert the surface ideology of the thriller, he does not remotely challenge the implicit ideology of the genre as the vehicle of "truth." Rather, Ambler uses this value to disseminate his own political views and even heightens the illusion of presenting the truth to make his point more acceptable.

Surprisingly, Graham Greene seems to challenge the ideology of the thriller more subtly than Ambler does. His classification of his works into "novels" and "entertainments" has always been an interesting phenomenon. Critics have often pointed out that the two are basically similar in plot structure and style. Eventually, towards the end of his career, Greene also realized this and the classification was abandoned.

Several of Greene's entertainments, like Brighton Rock, A Gun for Sale and The Confidential Agent, depend on the sense of giving the reader a look behind the headlines. A Gun for Sale begins and ends with a "newspaper headline" concerning the war in Europe. The novel concentrates on Raven, the killer hired to assassinate a diplomat who could possibly have prevented the outbreak of war. Once Raven has committed the murder, he finds he has been tricked and the novel follows Raven's attempts at revenge. He gradually comes to realize that he has been made an expendable pawn in the larger game of warfare.

D in The Confidential Agent knows he is merely an insignificant tool of his unnamed country's government. He is sent to negotiate a deal with British coalmine owners without which his government would probably lose the civil war. Greene seems to emphasize the fact that personalities, personal beliefs, likes and dislikes change the course of political events and we, the newspaper readers, never get to know the real story.

Brighton Rock too begins by literally taking the reader behind the headlines. The novel begins with Charles Hale, the newspaper's "Kolly Kibber,"

who has to leave a trail in seaside resorts for readers to find and claim prizes. The heat and discomfort felt by Hale contradict the connotations of a harmless newspaper game. Of course, his murder, or death, is misrepresented in the paper as we the readers know about Pinkie and his gang. Ida, Hale's companion at the time of his death, is compelled by the need to find out for herself the real story behind Hale's death.

The novel begins dramatically. The first sentence--"Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours that they meant to murder him" (5)--takes the novel right into the thick of things. Nominally the book follows the structure of a detective novel in a very basic sense, because here Ida, the seeker of knowledge, is out to discover the truth about Hale's death. However, the novel itself focusses on the characters rather than on the process of discovery. Almost the entire novel is focussed on Pinkie. The suspense is not whether Pinkie and his gang will succeed--the novel makes it clear that he will not--but rather about the depths of sin Pinkie will descend to in the course of the novel. He begins with the attempted murder of Hale (though we know that Hale actually died of a heart attack before the gang could kill him) then goes on to the murder of Spicer, a member of the gang. But to Pinkie, none of this is as sinful as his unsanctified civil marriage to Rose. To him, living in mortal sin seems a much more irrevocable act than murder and Rose too seems to believe this. She guesses Pinkie's role in the murders and marries him with that knowledge, but the

unsanctified marriage is what she thinks implicates her in sharing Pinkie's sinfulness.

One of the recurrent themes of the novel is the simultaneous coexistence of several worlds which rarely seem to meet or acknowledge each other. Brighton itself is presented as a rather pathetic seaside town bustling with cheap shows and bars. Behind this benign surface are the two worlds of Pinkie and his ineffectual gang and Colleoni, the successful gangleader. Ida, presented to us as a kind of earth-mother figure, originally belongs to neither but bludgeons her way into these worlds, yet, in a way, her interference only aggravates the death and disruption, suggesting that, perhaps, it is best to leave things undisturbed. This thematic concern reflects an aspect of the ideology of the thriller form that promises the reader a glimpse of a normally hidden world.

Unlike Ambler, Greene does not present us with easy good/evil equations. It is in this that he deviates most from the conventional thriller. There are few unambiguously morally positive characters either in Greene's novels or his entertainments. In fact Greene seems to wish to sympathize with all his wrongdoers, whether Scobie in The Heart of the Matter, Raven in A Gun for Sale or Pinkie in Brighton Rock. Pinkie is perhaps the most unidimensionally evil character in Greene--Greene even shows him in the archetypical evil posture of plucking the legs off a fly. Yet Greene, by repeatedly telling us about his deprived childhood, manages to create, if not sympathy, at least understanding for Pinkie. We know that he lived in an extremely poor neighborhood; in describing

it, Greene concentrates on the poverty of the soul rather than material poverty. His parents, like Rose's parents, were indifferent to his needs. His life and ambitions are limited right from the start.

The main code in the gang is that of machoism and often, for example when Pinkie is trying to get Spicer to retrieve one of Hale's cards from Rose's table, they sound like children daring and mocking each other for their fears. Yet Pinkie is not totally subservient to this code either because he neither drinks nor has any interest in women. His only quality, the one that makes him a gang leader in the first place, is his total lack of imagination and experience. He is extremely singleminded in his pursuits. When he goes to "carve up" Brewer for switching allegiances, the fact that Brewer's wife is ill and needs attention does not have the slightest impact on him. Despite all Rose does for him, he does not develop any affection for her.

Pinkie is definitely the bad guy in the novel, but it is interesting that Ida, the "detective," is not a good guy. In fact, Ida is as ruthlessly singleminded as Pinkie. Once she decides she is going to find out what killed Hale, she refuses to let anything get in her way. She is as responsible as Pinkie for what happens, because the police were content to accept Hale's death as natural. As a result of Ida's interfering, Pinkie has Spicer killed, has to marry Rose and expose her to "greatest horror of all," (247) the fact that he never loved her, and Pinkie commits suicide. It is suggested that Ida's easy definitions of Right and Wrong are somehow more insidiously evil than Pinkie's cruelty. She is an entirely secular

force--her interactions with the spiritual world are limited to the ouija board and her belief in signs. She is not virtuous in any sense of the word. She lies, bribes Cubitt for information, has a string of casual affairs and uses the men around her, yet she justifies all this because she is out to revenge Hale's death. Eventually she admits that it is not even revenge that drives her, but the enjoyment of the chase. Yet her very flurry of activity leads to more evil deeds than does the sullen silence and inactivity of people like Rose's parents. The metaphors associated with Ida present her as an unthinking woman with an animal vitality and this belittles her motives and actions.

Rose is perhaps the true innocent in the novel, because she is driven by love for Pinkie. Yet even her motives are not purely magnanimous. She craves the social position of a wife, and is especially proud to be married to someone famous who is involved in intrigue and business. The world of the Cosmopolitan is beyond her dreams. Unlike Pinkie, Rose's ambitions are modest, yet like him, she is ruthless when her love and stability are threatened. She is the only person who can communicate with Pinkie because of their shared background and the language of religion which is sometimes literally presented as exchanges in the Latin of prayer. The other characters are also neither unidimensionally good nor bad.

In this and other entertainments, Greene uses the same style, a stark realism, as he does in his novels. He shows, in this novel, the dual aspect of a holiday resort town like Brighton. The two worlds clash with one another

occasionally, but usually the bright tourists are unaware of the town's darker side. Pinkie and his gang ignore the tourists and seem almost unaware of them. The few times the two worlds do connect usually end in disaster. Ida from the world of the tourists enters Pinkie's world with disastrous effect. The photographer on the pier captures Spicer at the wrong place at the wrong time for all to see, and so on. Usually in thrillers, it is the other way around--evil enters the country manor house to cause a series of murders, or the secret agent puts a bomb in an international airport, killing innocent people. Here the two worlds could coexist peacefully until a person from the 'normal' world invades the world of Pinkie.

Ultimately, it is precisely the lack of clearcut moral judgements that is at the same time Greene's strength and his most important inversion of the thriller structure. In novel after novel, Greene disrupts the equations set up in the conventional thriller. In Brighton Rock, the villains are suitably punished: Pinkie is dead at the end, Rose is soon going to be disillusioned about her relationship with Pinkie, while Ida goes home to muse about whether she should marry Tom, yet obviously the novel undermines its own apparently tidy end by creating a sense of sympathy around Pinkie's death and presenting Ida in rather negative terms. Raven, the hired gun in A Gun for Sale, becomes sympathetic, a victim of larger forces; D, The Confidential Agent, is crippled, driven by personal fears and motives, while the two sides fighting the civil war seem equally immoral in their practices. The priest in The Power and the Glory is an alcoholic who constantly breaks his vows. There are no reassuring moral categories and equations in

Greene. The defeat of the evil characters does not mean the triumph of good, as in ordinary thrillers.

Even in purely genre fiction, it is usually the villain who is absolutely sure of himself and his motives. Fleming's Blofeld never has any compunctions or thoughts about what he is doing. The villain's total inflexibility of purpose and means always contrasts sharply with the innovative creativity of the hero. In Greene too, the smug assuredness of beliefs is suspect. Only the most insensitive, like Ida, or most evil, like Colleoni, are firm in their purpose. Those who, like D, agonize over their affiliations, or hold on to them despite doubts and disillusionment, like Czinner in Stamboul Train, are real heroes. In Greene, as in popular fiction, singlemindedness is not a positive trait.

These novels by Greene do seem to perpetuate the feeling that by reading them, the reader experiences a new world. Greene's extremely detailed descriptions of settings and characters portray a world visually concrete. There are no schisms or gaps left for the reader to fill in or complete. The novels try to fully control the reader's responses. For example, we are given a look into the reason for Pinkie's action by getting to know his childhood. The novels have all the answers for us, the readers, though the characters may be caught in dilemmas. Thus Greene uses the authority of both social realism and the form of detective fiction. While there are few neat endings or clear moral lines in Greene, the authority of the author is as strong as, if not stronger than that in the more conventional thriller and this sense of power is transmitted to the reader. We can

always sympathize with and judge Pinkie, Ida, and Rose from a sense of superiority. The reader, as in conventional thrillers, feels privileged because s/he has been allowed a glimpse into worlds which are usually hidden. Thus, the author and the reader remain in control of the events.

In Fowles' The Collector, the author's control is less obvious because of the structure of the novel. Here the dual narratives of the middle-class art student, Miranda, and Clegg, the blue-collar man who kidnaps her, conflict explicitly. This novel uses events typical of sensationalist fiction: a beautiful young girl is kidnapped by a man who loves her and wants her to fall in love with him. Yet the novel pulls itself out of mere sensationalism mainly because of the effect of the intertwined monologues. The plot of the novel is not that of the typical thriller, as here the criminal is not pursued. Rather, the tension is based on whether Miranda can escape. The fact that she dies in captivity and Clegg begins targeting another victim obviously denies the possibility of a neat triumph of good over evil.

The two narratives represent the struggle for power between the two characters and their worlds. The names, backgrounds and styles of the two characters are meant to be in conflict. They have differing educational backgrounds, family upbringings and goals in life. Miranda is the daughter of a doctor. She has always been well-off, has got a scholarship to an art school in London, and is involved in a complex relationship with an artist much older than her. Miranda is trying hard to renounce the suburban world of her upbringing

and become part of the art world which she sees as honest, caring and creative. Clegg has no real family. He has been brought up by his aunt in a strict puritanical atmosphere. He is shy, awkward, diffident. Once he has won a great deal of money from the pools, he does not know what to do with it, even how to spend it to bring pleasure to himself. The most symbolic difference between Miranda and Clegg is pointed out to us many times--Clegg's hobby is collecting butterflies, while Miranda is an artist. Miranda points out that he is a destroyer of beauty, who needs to classify and stultify all natural beauty and life, whereas she sees herself as a creator of beauty and therefore life. Clegg's other hobby is photography and Miranda sees this too as a dead art, unable to capture the essence of life. Clegg seems to need to make objects of everything around him. He likes best the pictures of Miranda which show only her body, without her face. Palmer writes of the villains of popular fiction who view people as objects and try to treat them as such as an exercise of their power. Clegg is repeatedly shown as having this need.

The beginning section, which introduces and positions the characters, works effectively because it is "written" by Clegg. The very language he uses tells us a lot about him. Unlike Miranda in her monologue, Clegg tries to write "properly" in paragraphs, with a sprinkling of long words, yet we notice the run-on sentences, the euphemisms, especially those regarding sex like "the business with the woman," (13) "the Things couples get up to," (13) "the bit of you-know what," (12)

"the crude animal thing I was born without." (11) These place him more precisely than the actual background information we do get.

Miranda's language shows a familiarity with expressing herself. She is comfortable in her writing, which is direct, expressive--a more literate style of writing. She does not bother with grammar; rather, she is using the written word to release her tensions and explore her feelings. In fact, the two writers use language in entirely different ways.

From the beginning, Clegg is trying to justify his actions. He insists that he has not committed any action premeditatedly, but rather, everything just fell into place. His world is extremely constricted. His only interests are his hobbies and Miranda. His dream is to marry Miranda and be an articulate member of the Bug Society, where he and Miranda will shine as the perfect host and hostess. He tells us that he goes to the museums and art galleries only to have something in common with Miranda. He sees no beauty in the paintings Miranda tries to show him. His language is always elliptical and the reader has to read between the lines. For example, he says, "I let myself have the bad dreams [about Miranda]. She cried or usually knelt. Once I let myself dream I hit her across the face."(8) The phrasing is undoubtedly odd. Throughout the narrative, he insists on his rationality and patience. Eventually it is all Miranda's fault because she refuses to be grateful and fall in love with him.

We see many of the incidents through both Clegg's and Miranda's eyes and this dual perspective shows us how impossible it is for them to communicate.

Clegg's attempts to beautify Miranda's cell and his home only bring out Miranda's contempt because all the items he buys are kitsch. Even the dialogues between them, which are presented to us by both the characters, show the differences between them. Miranda acts out various roles to try to communicate with Clegg. She is alternately sweet, aggressive, and so forth. Clegg sees these changes as part of her artistic temperament and is furious when any of her actions destroy the unrealistic image he has built of her.

These clashes represent the class conflict between the characters. Clegg, though now rich, can never really be accepted by the bourgeoisie, as he keeps telling us. The waiters sneer at him and he is never comfortable. Miranda with her upper-class education, accent, and aspirations is part of a world that is beyond Clegg's reach. The areas that symbolize the division are art, politics, religion, in short almost anything. Though in the beginning we do tend to sympathize with Miranda, there are passages where her obvious sense of superiority is repellent.

Because in this novel there are only the two monologues, the author's intentions are much less overt than Greene's are. There is really no explicit system of values in the structure, though reading the incidents through Miranda's diary later does superimpose a kind of value system on what we have already read in Clegg's narrative. The implied set of values that emerges is rather close to the one outlined for Miranda by her lover, G.P. There is no question that Clegg is the villain but Clegg's evil is intensified by the fact that he has hideous taste and no intellectual life--in fact, the novel seems to suggest that these things go

naturally together. Yet the picture of Clegg's upbringing, as with Pinkie, explains his actions and his character. In fact, the stratified class system seems to be the real villain of the piece. Even Miranda feels stifled by the class structure and she talks of having to cauterize class allegiances. She claims her values are based on caring, or feeling, as she keeps trying to point out to Clegg, and not on money and class. Yet she and her friends seem pretentious and snobbish. When they see an act of bullying in front of them, they just walk away. The fact that Clegg is victorious over Miranda is representative of the power of the uncultured mass over the intellectual, not merely the triumph of evil over good. In Aristos Fowles writes about the problems of universal education and liberalism. He seems to be intellectually leftist, yet the fear that the values of the mob could swamp intellectual creativity is of concern in Aristos and some of his novels.

Fowles' later novels show his interest in issues that are usually identified as postmodernist concerns. For example, in novels like The Magus or The Ebony Tower the issue of creative control forms part of the plot. The famous chapter in French Lieutenant's Woman where the author supposedly decides the fate of the characters by the toss of a coin also highlights the issue of authorial control over not only the characters, but also the readers. In that novel Fowles repeatedly undermines the authority of the form of the novel with quotations, intrusions, alternative endings, and so on. In The Collector, none of these techniques are used. In this novel, the absence of the omniscient narrator and the dual narrative structure seem to shift some of the responsibility of judgement onto the reader.

However, this is only a nominal change, because Fowles does not really leave the reader with many options--the judgement is predetermined.

What is interesting in this novel is that Fowles uses the form of popular fiction to raise questions on issues like the audience for art and the purpose of art. There is an implied hierarchy of attitudes towards art in Miranda's monologues and she is at the top while Clegg is at the bottom. When she gets him to read The Catcher in the Rye, she asks him if he has ever read a book apart from measly detective stories that do not count as books. This comment seems to undermine the authority of the novel we are reading, but, as Collins points out, this kind of remark is common in detective novels, which constantly seek to legitimize themselves alone in the larger tradition of the genre. While the heroine's attitude within this novel repeatedly undermines the authority of popular fiction, the novel is ambiguous enough in its genre to be hailed as a successful thriller, "a sheer horror story" (jacket cover). The film version, which eliminates all the complexities of the novel, shows it is possible to read it only on the level of popular fiction. That is, the novel fits into the thriller tradition while apparently privileging "high art" through Miranda's beliefs and comments.

These three novelists all utilize the structure of the thriller to propagate beliefs of their own. They consciously challenge the political beliefs that the form usually supports. In Ambler's novels, this is done most simplistically; he just inverts the political allegiances of the characters and retains almost all the characteristics of a conventional thriller. In Greene's thrillers we find a more

complex value-system of morality introduced. By creating a sense of sympathy and understanding for his "villains" Greene disrupts the neat categorizations normal in popular fiction. Greene also undermines the genre's dependence on strategies like suspense; rather, in most of Greene's novels the nature of the suspense is changed. Here the issues of individual redemption become more important than the socially accepted forms of reward and punishment. In Brighton Rock, for example, Pinkie contemplates the possibility of repentance at the moment of death. In The Confidential Agent, D fails in his mission, but wins in terms of the novel because he regains the capacity to love and cherish another person. The Human Factor is a story about betrayal in British Intelligence, but as Greene says in the Introduction, it concentrates on "the more important private life" of the members of the Intelligence, and, as he realizes, "As a love story. . . it might have succeeded." Thus, Greene privileges individual, private values that must be formed through experiences of pain and suffering in the place of predetermined and rigid social and political moralities like patriotism which are unquestioningly accepted in traditional thrillers.

In The Collector, Fowles substitutes a moral structure based heavily on the characters' attitude to art for more usual moral structures. In this aesthetic value system, Clegg comes across as negative because he indulges in pornographic photography and believes that his collection of mounted and categorized butterflies is more attractive than live butterflies. Miranda, an art student, is the counterpoint who can spend hours studying plates of works by Picasso or can read

Catcher in the Rye for the fourth time. This aesthetic value-system is linked with the characters' moral value systems and is reflected in the ambiguous form of the novel itself, which utilizes the basic structure of a suspense novel while depending so heavily on intertextual references to "classics" like The Tempest, Clarissa, and even Dickens' novels.

The three novelists discussed in this chapter have utilized the form of the thriller to insert their own political and moral philosophies, their own versions of reality, without questioning the claim of the form to be able to offer "valid" representations of "truth." In fact, by being careful to be extremely realistic in their mode of representation, they actually utilize this claim of the genre. A writer like Robbe-Grillet is fighting precisely this claim as he shows that the form can never capture reality, and that plot structure, unity, and logic are all hopeless attempts to capture the subtlety and complexities of life.

In fact, most "serious" writers who have written thrillers strengthen the claim of the genre because they try to be as realistic as possible in representing characters, their motivations and settings. The Riverside Villa Murders by Kingsley Amis is typical of the form, except that the characters are presented more realistically than is usual in conventional thrillers. Peter, the adolescent central character, is especially carefully portrayed. Tremor of Intent, a successful thriller by Anthony Burgess, also gives a depth to the characterizations which accentuates the novel's sense of reality. Doris Lessing's first novel, The Grass is Singing, is a detective novel of sorts. It begins with a "newspaper report" entitled

"Murder Mystery" which gives the facts of the violent death of Mary Turner. The rest of the novel is a detailed account of the social forces that led to the murder. On the other hand, John Braine's The Pious Agent fails because it is not realistic enough for the genre. Yet it is interesting that most of these writers felt the need to introduce systems of values into the thrillers. One of the most popular beliefs to be used as an alternative seems to be the Catholic faith; the agents Flynn in The Pious Agent and Hillier in Tremor of Intent are devout Catholics who strive to find a point of equilibrium between their faith and occupation. In Lessing's The Grass Is Singing, the black African laborer, Moses, offers an ideological counterpoint to the white, middle-class Mary. It seems that these writers, like Ambler, Greene and Fowles, realized that the form privileges certain surface ideologies and they felt the need to actively dislodge and replace them with alternative systems of beliefs. Those who, like Amis, did not substitute alternative beliefs wrote good thrillers which upheld both the surface and "deep structure" ideologies of the form. Even the novels considered in the previous chapter are ideologically less challenging to the form because they do not actively substitute the inherent surface ideologies with alternative moral systems. As we saw, the political alignments of Le Carré and Forsyth may be more complex than that of Fleming, but eventually all these writers present the British and their institutions as the best. In Dogs of War, Cat Shannon, not the African leader, has to be the one in control of the situation and thus the real hero. However, in The Confidential Agent, for example, though D fails his mission and finds himself

manipulated at every turn, he becomes heroic because Greene has successfully substituted a system of values that recognizes personal integrity over ruthless efficiency. Similarly, Miranda is the heroine not only because she is the victim, but because she is closer to the aesthetic ideal set up in The Collector than is Clegg. Ambler, Greene and Fowles try to use the form of the detective novel to explore ideas, the psychology of the characters, the forces that motivate them; in short, they seem to believe in the illusion that detective fiction can go beyond surfaces to the "truth."

CHAPTER 4

REPUDIATIONS OF THE GENRE

Critics who write about postmodern detective novels usually concentrate on obvious subversions of the form, like the novels of Robbe-Grillet. However, intertextuality is one of the most widely accepted strategies of postmodernism and it seems to me that some of the novelists usually considered as part of the traditional mainstream are using the thriller structure as an implied intertext in apparently traditional novels, without the more obvious subversive tactics. It seems that two of the main reasons for this are first, the need to acknowledge and perhaps deal with the obvious success of this form in modern times, but also a need to question the facile ideologies inherent in the structure of the thriller. The three novels considered in this section do not directly use the form of the conventional thriller. Rather, some aspects of these novels seem to refer to the thriller obliquely in varying degrees.

In Murder Must Appetize H.R.F. Keating, commenting on ties between detective fiction and academicians, notes that Perronet is the name of a character in G.D.H. and Margaret Cole's detective novel Greek Tragedy and that "from the subconscious of that obvious detective-story addict Iris Murdoch a quarter of a century later in An Unofficial Rose what should pop up as a character name but

Perronett." (54) In fact, there are many more structural similarities between a number of Murdoch's novels and the traditional set-up of detective novels.

One of the most obvious similarities is the presentation of a limited cast of characters who are usually a reasonably assorted lot. Like characters in, say, an Agatha Christie novel, they usually know each other or get to know each other in the course of the novel. In a novel like The Bell the characters are, as in a detective novel, isolated from the nearest town in their semi-religious commune. An assortment of people are gathered there and in the course of the novel we get to know of several "skeletons in the closets" of the apparently noble characters like Michael. The supposedly pure young girl who is to join the convent that week has a crush on Michael and thus feels herself to be unworthy of becoming a nun. However, Michael is a secret homosexual who had once seduced her brother, Nick, who also lives in the commune. Thus, as in a detective story, the reader gets to see the darker side of the characters as they interact in close proximity.

Another similarity is the atmosphere and setting of this novel. The commune is located in an old mansion and even Dora, apparently the most pragmatic of characters, can feel the oppressive atmosphere. The old legends surrounding the Abbey create a sense of mystery. The deep, forbidding lake seems to demand the discovery of a corpse. As in most Murdoch novels, there is a tangle of emotional relationships which adds to the sense of intrigue and deception.

Death does enter this closed community and, as in so many detective stories, it triggers new emotions and revelations. Dora gains in self-confidence and Toby, the young man, goes onto college less gullible and more worldly than he was at the beginning of the novel. There is no actual murder though, and the similarities are extremely tenuous; only hinted at, not spelt out.

However, the novel that uses the echoes of the detective novel most obviously is The Black Prince (1973). This novel has several intertexts, the most dominant being Hamlet, but the detective story seems to be almost equally important, though this relationship is suggested in more subtle ways. The novel begins with Arnold Baffin, the commercially and critically successful novelist, calling Bradley Pearson, the narrator, and saying "quietly, rather slowly, 'Bradley, could you come round here, please? I think that I may have just killed Rachel' [Baffin's wife]." (29) Though this incident ends rather anti-climactically with Bradley Pearson trying to console the hysterical Rachel while Arnold seems to be shocked into repentance, it does, like a murder in a detective story, trigger a sequence of events which culminates in the murder of Arnold Baffin, which is where the novel (as narrated by Pearson) ends.

It seems that the whole issue of the relationship between popular writing and "serious" writing is one of the focuses of the novel. A kind of aesthetic code is instituted in the novel. This interest is presented both through the characters and through the form, which alludes to both Hamlet and the detective story, while the plot follows melodramatic events of the kind that Pearson finds so distasteful

in fiction. Arnold Baffin is the author of several mainstream novels that are both critically and commercially successful. Though other characters in the novel like Francis Marloe seem to treat Baffin with respect and awe, Bradley, himself a writer, is disdainful of Baffin's work. According to him, "it seemed to me that he achieved success at the expense of merit." (31) Bradley refers to him rather disparagingly as "a one-book-a-year man Arnold Baffin, the prolific popular novelist, [who] is never long out of the public eye." (24) On the other hand, he sees himself as one of "the saints of art who have simply waited mutely all their lives rather than profane the purity of a single page with anything less than what is perfectly appropriate and beautiful, that is to say, with anything less than what is true." (12) These sentiments are expressed throughout the novel with varying degrees of viciousness. Once, when Pearson is feeling charitable towards Baffin, he orders his friend's collected works, but by the time he gets delivery, he is again disillusioned and tears the books apart with gleeful help from Marloe.

Even Julian, the daughter of Arnold and the object of Pearson's obsessive love, wants to be a writer, and she comes to Pearson to learn about writing from him. The book she wishes to discuss first is Hamlet and Pearson rattles off a string of absurd theories about the drama, almost parodying the convoluted logic of obtuse literary criticism. However, in the postscripts we learn that Julian has become a successful poet and, as the "editor" points out, hides her feelings about the incidents related by Pearson in a jumble of poetic metaphors and musings. Even Francis Marloe, the discredited physician, is planning to publish a book to

be entitled, Bradley Pearson, the Paranoiac from the Paper Shop. Rachel, who is going through a midlife crisis and feels that she has wasted her life, wishes that she had completed her education because she feels that she too could have been a successful writer like her husband.

One of the most interesting ideas is that Pearson is convicted for the murder of Baffin because the jury easily determines the motive to be jealousy of the younger, more famous writer. They can be so easily satisfied because the complex love affairs never reach the trial. This seems perfectly reasonable to the tabloids and the courtroom observers. The fact that Pearson tore up Baffin's collected works is seen as conclusive evidence of his jealousy of the more successful writer.

However, even in the foreword Pearson does present himself as truly critical of Baffin and wistful that he has to rely

> for my fame upon publicity deriving from my adventures outside the purlieus of art. My name is not unknown, but this alas is not because I am a writer. As a writer I have reached and doubtless will reach only a perceptive few. The paradox perhaps of my whole life, and it is an absurdity upon which I do not cease to meditate, is that the dramatic story which follows, so unlike the rest of my work, may well prove to be my only 'best seller'. There are undoubtedly here the elements of crude drama, the 'fabulous' events which simple people love to hear of. (12-13)

These comments, which sound suspiciously like common evaluations of popular culture, become doubly ironic because they are written by Iris Murdoch who is, like Baffin, a one-a-year novelist whose novels sound rather similar to Baffin's.

But of course, we are meant to take Pearson's comments skeptically and this is an area where the usual conventions of detective novels are overturned. Usually, the narrators in detective novels are completely trustworthy. Even if, like Conan Doyle's Watson or Christie's Hastings they are obtuse, they do try to present the facts as objectively as possible. Here, though, perhaps we do trust Pearson's narrative; the numerous postscripts by the other characters undermine the authority of the main narrative, until we are no longer sure that Pearson's account of the events is really the true one. If his account is true, then there has been a miscarriage of justice, which unlike in the traditional detective novels, is left uncorrected. The police, instead of being the heroes of the novel, become merely part of the society that undervalues Pearson's literary achievements.

In fact, the sense of the injustice of life seems to be one of the emotions connected with both the deaths in the novel, unlike in a detective novel where the deaths have to be justified by the victory of justice at the end. Priscilla, Brad's sister, commits suicide when she hears about her husband's affair with Marigold. Roger's relationship is presented as extremely happy and fulfilled, so the subtitle of the novel, "A Celebration of Love," seems ironic because in this case love leads to Priscilla's pathetic despair and death. Priscilla sees that as an unattractive uneducated middle-aged woman, she cannot compete with Marigold for Roger, and she lacks the determination and strength to begin life anew alone. It is also ironic that she takes advantage of both Francis' and Brad's absences to take the

overdose of pills. Both Francis and Brad had left her to pursue romantic relationships of their own, neither of which lasts for very long.

A novel so preoccupied with interpersonal relationships and subtitled "A Celebration of Love" could be expected to create a value-system of love and friendship, privileging love above all other values, but in this novel it seems as if the value-system is based on aesthetic considerations. It has been noted that detective fiction sometimes disregards the legal system to privilege a value-system based on personal loyalty, physical prowess and other qualities. Here it seems that the ability to write eclipses all other moral qualities. However, one of the problems with this "literary morality" is that the judgements become too personal and subjective to be of much use. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the two most dominating sets of intertextual references come from two almost opposite ends of literature--Shakespeare's Hamlet and the modern detective story. Collins comments on the unusually high number of Shakespearean quotations found in British detective fiction and suggests that writers of detective novels may be using such sustained references not merely to exhibit their literary snobbery but also to suggest that their novels are the true heirs of the British literary tradition and that novels like Ulysses are mere aberrations in that tradition. This literary debate is presented as part of Pearson's literary dilemma. While he reveres the classics (Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, etc.) he realizes that his only successful novel is likely to be an autobiographical account of love and murder.

Of course this novel structurally inverts the format of the detective story in that the murder of Arnold is practically the last incident in the novel. Conventionally, the characters, their emotions and motives, are seen in the light of the murder; here we see the build-up of emotion before the actual murder. The police, unlike conventional fictional police or P.I.s, refuse to investigate; instead they immediately form their opinions and railroad Pearson into admitting his guilt. Through his act of accepting the charge, Pearson does not become tragic or heroic, even though he claims he keeps quiet to save Rachel and Julian from the scandal. Despite everything he does, he remains pathetic and slightly comic.

As if to emphasize the novel's relationship with detective fiction, characters refer to things like the urge to kill someone by driving a hot knitting needle through his/her liver and then wonder where they picked up this awful phrase. This novel seems to be an ironic comment on some of the major debates about the different forms of fiction. Yet the structure of this particular novel does not help us to form very clear judgements, partly because of the device of using Pearson as narrator. While he rails against Baffin's novels, some parts of the "novel" by Pearson are not really well-written. In particular, the descriptions of his relationship with Julian are awkward, sometimes to the point of being comic. He describes the impact of falling in love:

> I felt as if my stomach had been shot away, leaving a gaping hole. My knees dissolved, I could not stand up. I shuddered and trembled all over, my teeth chattered. My face felt as if it had become waxen and some huge strange weirdly smiling mask had been imprinted upon it, I had become some sort of God. (212)

Or: "In this blaze of light of course a few more mundane thoughts flitted to and fro like little birds, scarcely descried by one who was dazzled by emergence from the love." (214) This sort of excessive language is almost comic, especially when it comes from one who claims to try to attain purity and restraint in writing, yet this passage is followed by: "The reader. . . may feel impatient with the foregoing lyricism. . .I will not pause to answer this reader back" because the reader has never known what true love is like. (216) Constantly offering us these kinds of comments, Murdoch keeps destabilizing the reader's judgements because of a lack of any fixed frame of literary value. Even the dual intertext of Hamlet and detective stories is perhaps not so odd, because, after all, Hamlet itself can be seen as a story of murder, love, intrigue and retribution. By focussing on the issue of writing directly through the characters and commenting on the issues of literary genres through the narrative techniques and structure of the novel, Murdoch seems to be raising questions about the interrelationship between the various kinds of discourse familiar to modern readers without offering any particular answers to these questions.

These issues of modes of representation, subjectivity and individual concepts of reality are also the themes of several of Doris Lessing's novels. Her writing career is extremely interesting in that it reflects some of the shifts from the concerns of traditional modernist writing to those of postmodernist writing. At the beginning of her career she is quoted as saying that the realist novel is "the highest form of prose writing; higher than and out of the reach of any comparison

with expressionism, impressionism, symbolism, naturalism, or any other ism." (qtd. in Fishburn 6) Yet her later cycle of science fiction novels directly contradicts this belief. Increasingly, her novels have become ambiguous, often written in a traditional social realist style, yet hinting at supernatural, illogical happenings, as in The Fifth Child.

Even her first novel, The Grass is Singing (1950), reveals her interest in popular fiction. The novel begins:

> MURDER MYSTERY
> Mary Turner, wife of Richard Turner, a farmer at Ngesi, was found murdered on the front verandah of their homestead yesterday morning. The houseboy, who has been arrested, has confessed to the crime. No motive has been discovered. It is thought he was in search of valuables. (9)

This beginning suggests the typical detective novel where an investigation would follow the clues to unearth the real killer and the real motive. Instead, however, the novel tries to explain the psychological and social conditions which led to this murder. Mary Turner marries Richard, a poor farmer, mainly because society disapproves of an independent woman, but after the marriage she finds herself stifled by the poverty and boredom of the life of a poor farmer's wife. The force of the novel is generated by the odd relationship that develops between Mary and Moses, the native worker. As Mary gradually loses control over her own mind, she becomes more and more dependent on Moses, who cooks, feeds and dresses and generally looks after her. At the end Moses kills Mary and Richard goes completely mad. The newspaper headline-type beginning and the use of the phrase "murder mystery" seem to comment on the failure of both journalistic

writing and detective fiction, which tend to eliminate complex characterizations and offer simplistic, superficial motives for crime.

Yet by the time of The Good Terrorist (1985), Lessing's writing has matured in many ways. The title itself sets up some interesting paradoxes: are there some terrorists who are good? is there a value-system of terrorism itself by which some are good, others bad? and so on. The story follows the breakaway group the Communist Centre Union which is anxious to establish itself as a serious revolutionary force. Its members get in touch with the IRA and the KGB (represented by the mysterious Soviet agent next door), but are rebuffed by both so the CCU decides to prove its worthiness by exploding a bomb in a crowded part of London. That is when Alice, the central character of the novel, realizes the damage and hurt the bomb can cause and calls for help, but it is too late and the bomb explodes, killing and wounding several civilians and two members of the group. Ironically, the IRA denounces this act as barbarism, so even the group's political goal is not fulfilled.

However, as with the other novels in this chapter, the focus is on the characters, their emotions, interpersonal relationships, rather than the technicalities and physical obstructions to making a successful terrorist bombing--unlike in, say, a Forsyth novel. One of the things we quickly realize is that the members of the CCU are all marginal people in society. Each of them seems to have had emotional problems with adjusting to normal society. Faye, one of the more extremely disturbed characters, is a lesbian with an unspecified background

of abuse, who is liable to relapse into violent states without much provocation. Jasper, Alice's companion, seems to be equally tormented, partly as a result of his sexual preferences (which are not explained to us clearly) and partly due to traumatic experiences in his past which are also left unspecified. All of them are of middle-class origin, yet are content to live off the welfare cheques given to them by the state they apparently despise so much. Each of them seems to have joined the CCU in response to some deep emotional need in him/herself rooted in the past.

Alice seems, by comparison, stable and practical at the beginning when she cleans up the abandoned house and creates a comfortable, attractive living space for the group. Gradually, however, we realize that she too is self-deluded and often unable to distinguish between reality and her own imaginary creations. Her attempts to construct a comfortable living space seem to be a result of her feeling of neglect as a child when her parents hosted huge parties where interesting people with leftist leanings would gather for food and political discussions, while she was ignored. Another fact that Alice seems incapable of accepting is her parents' separation. She totally denies this and when it becomes impossible for her to ignore the fact that her childhood home has been sold and that her mother lives in a small apartment, she indulges in childish behavior like abusing her mother or throwing rocks at her father's new home.

Many of Lessing's later novels deal with the problem of integrating "objective" and "subjective" worlds. This issue is dealt with most explicitly in

Briefing for a Descent into Hell (1971), where we are taken into the hallucinations of a patient who has visions of mysterious sacred places with mythical creations which seem much more compelling than the mundane conversations of the doctors and nurses treating him. Lessing writes in the "Afterword, or Endpaper" to that novel that the point "was that the hero's or protagonist's extra sensitivity and perception must be a handicap in a society organised as ours is to favour the conforming, the average, the obedient." (307) In The Good Terrorist the consequences of the characters trying to reconcile their subjective and objective worlds through political action has disastrous effects for themselves and for others, but I think that because of the framework of a political thriller, this novel becomes a derogatory comment on the underlying ideology of conventional thrillers which privilege "objective facts" without acknowledging the importance of subjective factors at all. Characters like James Bond totally lack any kind of inner subjective worlds and we are not given any sense of what made them what they are. In The Good Terrorist, by contrast, even the KGB spy is presented with an almost sympathetic touch which helps us understand his desire for middle-class comforts and manners.

Repeatedly we see that most of the members of the commune have problems with accepting their backgrounds and the life around them. Alice notices at a meeting that all of the members try to disguise their accents. If they are working class, they try hard to speak the "Queen's English"; on the other hand if they have middle-class backgrounds, they try to speak with the accents of the

poor. This too is a concept that has long interested Lessing. In The Four-Gated City Martha consciously chooses between the personalities "Matty" or "Martha" or even spontaneously makes up names and characters to suit her mood. Identity itself seems to be a construct that can be endlessly changed or lost, and the characters in this novel seem to be trying to project identities that are compatible with their subjective visions of themselves. Faye does this kind of role-playing very conspicuously as she sometimes presents herself as an attractive, humorous character, sometimes as a vicious, selfish character, and sometimes lapses into a helpless nervous wreck. All of the others, too, consciously play around with their identities and images.

Most of the activities the group pursues seem devoid of political direction and commitment. For example, one day they decide to join the picketing newspaper unions. However, they make this political activity into a picnic where they indulge in immature behavior which alienates the very workers they went to support. Similarly, when Jasper and Alice go spray-painting slogans on walls, the content of the slogans seems secondary to the activity itself. Alice cherishes these moments because they are some of the rare times when she feels close to Jasper. Both find the task boring until a police car drives by. Then both feel like real revolutionaries defying the state apparatus. Jasper seems to need to go to jail periodically to preserve his self-image as a revolutionary. Even the CCU conference, supposedly a forum for discussing and defining their political goals, becomes a reunion for old friends with the political discussions taking second

place. Yet the group knows that political parties are supposed to have conferences once in a while, so they keep to the formal rules demanded by their beliefs.

Alice's total commitment to creating an attractive living space dulls her moral judgement, as she lies, steals and deceives, not from the state she is fighting, but from her family and friends who really care for her. She even exploits Philip, the meek house builder who eventually commits suicide after being repeatedly cheated and let down. Alice's passion for old houses seems to imply her aversion to change and progress, which is a curious attitude for a self-professed revolutionary.

Only the Jamaican, Jim, seems to be outside of this self-delusionary trend. Of true working class origins, he is genuinely interested in getting a job. Yet his trust in Alice is betrayed when he loses a job at her father's press on a false suspicion of stealing; actually it was Alice who stole the money, but later convinced herself that she had been given it.

Although this novel, unlike conventional thrillers, does not offer a clear-cut system of right and wrong, it clearly ridicules the efforts of the CCU and its members. Almost by default the people who see through the political pretensions of this group emerge as more stable and sensible. However this is no homogenous set. On the one hand, the very fact that the IRA and the KGB reject the CCU establishes them as relatively mature political organizations. The KGB agent seems to be content to recruit Pam, the most level-headed and

committed member of the CCU, to the long-term plan of subversion, though Alice is shocked by his middle-class yearnings. Similarly, even Alice's mother seems to be more genuinely politically leftist than Alice, though her daughter despises her lifestyle. At least her mother's commitment is based on a knowledge of revolutionary writings and theories, not merely on an instinctive sense of rebellion. Ordinary middle-class aspirations like those of Mary and Reggie or Alice's father are made to sound self-serving and limited. Jim and Philip, those who are willing to work for a living, seem to be the only positive forces, perhaps because they have no illusions about revolution and they do not create their own delusive justifications. However Philip is too timid and decent to survive as a business man and Jim too is unlucky. Of course the act of terrorism is condemned, but the sense remains that something is fundamentally wrong with a society that creates characters like Jasper and Faye and cannot absorb honest yet timid souls like Jim and Philip.

Lessing takes the basic structure of a thriller, but emphasizes the characters and their motivations the central focus, not the action they undertake. In fact, the allusions to the thriller form seem to reflect her belief that "objective realism" is not enough to understand events. By choosing to set up a dialectic relationship with the thriller form which is known for its fascination for and fidelity to facts and objective rationalism, Lessing appears to be taking up a stance which challenges the assumptions underlying this form.

Among the books I shall discuss, Muriel Spark's The Mandelbaum Gate is the novel with the least obvious connections with the thriller, yet an atmosphere of fear, distrust and subterfuge surround the characters right from the beginning. Set on the Israel/Jordan border, the novel follows the pilgrimage of Barbara Vaughan, an English spinster in her thirties who has parents of Jewish and Catholic beliefs and has chosen to convert to Catholicism. Her mixed parentage makes it difficult for her to travel in both these countries, though the danger is much more physical and threatening in Jordan than in Israel. The Middle East has often been the setting for thrillers recently because of the intrigues and high political passions in the area. This novel too builds up the passionate religiousness and nationalism of the Arabs and the Jews, as well as their mutual distrust, to create a space where a character's failure to be committed and properly earnest can incur disapproval, as in the case of both Abdul and Ephraim and their friends in the Acre.

However, we see the story and characters mainly through the consciousness of Freddy, the British civil servant doing his tour of duty in Israel. Freddy is almost an archetypical British officer, in that he hates passion, and is totally uncommitted to any particular faith or belief except an idealistic sense of patriotism. Barbara's religious commitment leaves him feeling uneasy and her quote from the Bible,

> I know of thy doings, and find thee neither cold nor hot; cold or hot, I would thou wert one or the other. Being what thou art, lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, thou wilt make me vomit thee out of my mouth. (17)

disturbs him quite a bit. Freddy prefers placidity. He likes living in a hotel because having a home of his own would mean he would be expected to entertain, take decisions etc. Even with his closest friends, Joanna and Matt Cartwright, Freddy likes to keep the relationship casual without any real intimacy. Obviously, Freddy finds the Middle East pretty incomprehensible though fascinating. Abdul in particular he finds charming.

Because of the impression we have of Freddy in Part One, his impulsive, carefree behavior in Part Two is quite striking. He suddenly enrolls the support of Alexandros and Suzi, Abdul's sister in Jordan, to help Barbara complete her pilgrimage. He steals into a Catholic nunnery to practically abduct Barbara in her nightgown, then insists that Barbara disguise herself as a deaf-mute old Arab woman. He has an affair with Suzi and almost incidentally finds the location of an information exchange point known as Nasser's Post Office and discovers the involvement of his colleagues, the Gardnors, in a communist Arab organization. All this is totally out of character for Freddy and this string of behavior is begun with the symbolic burning of both his mother's letter and his own long, boring, dutiful, hypocritical reply. Yet those who saw him in this carefree phase believe that he had never been happier.

What I find particularly interesting is that in this particular novel, the story of Freddy and Barbara seems to be complete even without the complication of Ruth Gardnor's capture as a spy. The melodramatic tiptoeing to the hollow in the tree by, in turn, Ruth, Freddy and Suzi is almost ridiculous. So is the image

of Freddy excitedly deciphering the message he retrieves, which turns out to be a bit of disinformation anyway, and then burning it up to prevent Suzi from reading it. Similarly, Ruth's impression that Barbara was an important agent for the spy network and their subsequent physical fighting seems like something out of a slapstick comedy. Perhaps the Gardnors provide a political aspect to the novel, which in Spark's value system is only incidental and even comic compared to the more important issues of individual development. This could explain the sense of triviality and melodrama that surrounds the subplot of Freddy's discovery of the spy network. Structurally this whole episode does not seem to fit in with the concept of the novel very well, which deals mainly with Barbara's agonizings over her relationship with the Church, Harry Clegg and her friend, Miss Rickward.

Of course, the novel does deal with deceptions and deceptive appearances at various levels. Barbara herself is not the timid, obsessed English spinster she first appears to be and she resents, for example, her cousins' refusal to even notice her passionate relationship with Clegg while she is staying with them. Abdul and his father, Joe, take deception to the level of a fine art and Freddy is fascinated with Abdul's charm even when he knows Abdul is not the most truthful man around. Freddy and his sisters' refusal to deal honestly with their mother's self-righteous tyranny is a similar reaction on a different level. The irony of Barbara's Catholic pilgrimage dressed as an Arab woman is more apparent. When Ricky produces the false baptismal certificate for Harry Clegg to prevent Barbara from marrying him, it proves to have the opposite result--Barbara can

now marry him with the approval of the Church--and all the priests explain to Ricky how if both parties are ignorant about the falsity of the certificate, the marriage is sanctified.

Yet this strange and passionate world turns out to be less harmful than the superficially calm Harrowgate because the premonitions of bloodshed that haunt Freddy turn true in the form of his mother's grisly murder by Benny, the old faithful servant. As he keeps saying, violence seems more appropriate to the Middle East. Benny in her later letters seemed to believe that Freddy's mother was the Devil Incarnate, so we gather that her murder was committed out of an insane religious frenzy. On the other hand, all the dangers in the Middle East somehow end harmlessly. Barbara completes her pilgrimage successfully; though she and Abdul have a few moments of panic during their first attempt to cross the border, their eventual journey is anticlimactically uneventful. Joanna ducks some bullets in the dangerous Potter's Field during her rambling there and Suzi is arrested for her role in the spy network but manages to bribe her way out. Eventually, very little violent physical action takes place in this volatile area.

As in the other novels, there are a number of conflicting systems of values represented by the various characters and the religious and national variety allows Spark to present a rather wide range of viewpoints. While Benny's religious fervor turns out to be destructive, Barbara's commitment seems to be one of the positive values in the novel. Her strength of mind and character is shown to be a result of her deep religious belief. In contrast, even the good-natured

benevolence of the Cartwrights and the normal uncommitted levelheadedness of Freddy become insipid and meaningless. Yet Suzi, perhaps the most attractive character in the novel, is outspokenly hedonistic and rebellious. Unlike her brother, she does not become a marginal individual, though she does, we hear, have to leave Jordan and eventually marries a wealthy lawyer. Most of the characterizations of the Arabs are unflattering. Joe Ramdez is interested only in his personal gain and prestige and even betrays his professed Arab patriotism when it benefits him. Everyone in Jordan seems bribable, even the doctors and the police. In a way, Suzi, it is suggested, is so attractive because she is an exception among Arab women with her "liberated" Westernized ways.

Perhaps this novel is trying to emphasize the importance of different religious and personal value systems and to belittle the political conflicts of the area by subordinating the political conflicts to religious and ethical concerns. The capture of an Arab spy does not seem important to any of the other characters, compared to their personal crises and triumphs. Perhaps the whole incident of Ruth Gardnor was meant to seem ridiculous, because in the end such political intrigues must seem childish and meaningless in the lives of most individuals. The importance given to such activities in thrillers is really, according to this novel, totally false, and inflated; rather it is the individual's growth and resolution that matters. Spark seems to be undermining the "deep structure" ideological claim of the thriller to be the vehicle of the most important truths.

These three novels then allude to the conventions of the thriller in rather oblique ways. Unlike the novels by Greene, for example, they do not utilize the entire structural framework of thrillers, yet by their obvious allusions, they evoke and perhaps challenge some of the most basic assumptions of the conventional thriller form. All of them use the consciousness of their central characters to unsettle the reader's implicit belief in the narrator. In Conan Doyle or Christie, though the narrator may be obtuse, we can never doubt the honesty of the narrator who is expected to provide the reader with all the "facts" which the detective discovers so that the readers may participate in the solution of the puzzle. Here, as in many modern and postmodern novels, we the readers soon begin to doubt the veracity of the central consciousness--Brad Pearson's narrative is undermined mainly by the many postscripts, while we soon realize that the apparently sensible Alice is self-delusive. In The Mandelbaum Gate the objective omniscient narrator is unimpeachable, but the vision of the Middle East as seen by Freddy is constantly undermined, most obviously in his relationship with Abdul. This unsettles the notion of an "objective" truth based on the facts alone. All of the novels show that "facts" themselves are often the result of personal creations and perceptions.

This sense of the impossibility of knowing "truth" is accentuated by the sense of sometimes ambiguous or at least vague resolutions. In The Mandelbaum Gate at least we, the readers, seem to know the truth, but the characters never find out about the events that shaped their lives. Barbara believes in the false

certificate, Freddy never fully recalls what happened during his days of amnesia, Suzi never knows that Freddy forgot their affair, that he did not reject her, and so on. However, though the characters are unable to see the whole truth, the readers, at least, can. This comfortable feeling is disrupted in The Good Terrorist, where the fictions and reality become so confused that it is impossible to evaluate them totally, and also in Murdoch's The Black Prince, where our confidence in Pearson's narrative is consistently undermined.

This in turn means that logic and rationality are not enough to understand and evaluate the "facts"-- the "little gray cells" are inadequate to sift out the truth because truth itself is so dependent on individual perceptions. Objective realities are empirically undeterminable, as are value judgements. In fact, logic and rationality are displaced by various value systems in these novels. In The Black Prince perhaps the most pervasive value system is that of aesthetic creation. The novel presents several different kinds of writing and seems to invite us to base our assessments of the characters on the way they utilize writing. Pearson seems to judge others by his theory of sublime creation and is himself judged guilty largely on the basis of his obvious literary resentment of the murdered man. Marloe's pseudo-scientific publications reflect his basically dishonest character. Julian's obfuscation of the facts through her excessively poetic language is yet another manifestation of literature while Christian's use of the postscript to advertize her boutique is more blatantly commercially exploitative, yet no absolute hierarchy is established in the terms of the novel.

The Mandelbaum Gate juxtaposes Jewish, Muslim and Catholic ways of living as well as self-serving hedonistic and more vaguely defined humanistic philosophies with the committed political fanaticism of Ruth. Here the setting allows for several existing beliefs to be contrasted as well as allowing for individual interpretations of these philosophies. Religions are contrasted, but so are the intellectual variations in them as manifested in Clegg, Ricky, Saul, Michael and Benny. While Barbara and Clegg may be intended as attractive characters, Suzi with her secular unscrupulousness and the Cartwrights with their diffident sense of caring are also positive counterpoints.

This confusion is most accentuated in The Good Terrorist where Alice's mind is shown to be so distorted that our vision too becomes confused. Judgements are difficult to make, though the sense of a sad, corrupt society does pervade the novel. There are a number of varying shades of political ideology and activity that the characters of the novel indulge in, yet it is difficult to see any good coming out of any of them. It is perhaps significant that when Alice panics and needs to call for help at the end, she dials the number of the Salvation Army.

Thus all three of the novels seem to obliquely refer to, evoke, and dismiss several of the political ideologies inherent in the "deep structure" of the thriller form. Basically, they deny the importance of "objectivity" and "objective facts." In detective fiction, the focus is always on the facts and it is through a correct juxtaposition of the facts that reality can be understood. All of these novels challenge this notion. In varying ways they emphasize the importance of each

individual's concept of reality and how it usually is impossible to logically reach the "truth." The pervasive belief of most of our society that logic and objectivity can lead us to answers is reflected in the popularity of detective stories and thrillers and it seems that each of these three novelists confronted this belief by challenging the fictional forms which uphold and deify rationality and fact-based knowledge.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The relationship between thrillers and proponents of high culture cannot really be considered an exclusively postmodern phenomenon. In fact, almost all critics who have written about the genre comment on the close links between the thriller and academia. In both America and England, many of the successful thriller writers are academicians or have written books in other "more serious" genres. One of the earliest members of this group is Cecil Day-Lewis, the Poet Laureate of England who wrote under the pseudonym Nicholas Blake. Though conventional in form and structure, these novels usually introduced a left-wing ideological bias into the plot. Other writers who wrote two different kinds of novels include Willard Huntingdon Wright, who wrote as S.S. Van Dine the once popular series with Philo Vance, and literary and art criticism under his own name. Professors of literature who write detective novels include Carolyn Heilbrun (Amanda Cross) and J.I.M. Stewart (Michael Innes). Gore Vidal published three mysteries under the pseudonym Edgar Box while Evan Hunter uses the pseudonym Ed McBain when writing the 87th Precinct police novels though the more "serious" work is published under his own name.

Also, despite Edmund Wilson's query, "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?" academicians have often tried to theorize about the form. One of the earlier essays is Auden's, "The Guilty Vicarage," published in 1948. In this essay he suggests that thrillers propagate a Christian view of good and evil, sin and redemption which is the basis for the appeal of the form. Since then many critics have attempted to present reasons for the success of the genre ranging from socio-political (Mandel's Delightful Murder, Knight's Form and Ideology in Crime fiction), psychological (Rycroft's "A Detective Story: Psychological Observations") to genre studies (Cawelti's Adventure, Mystery and Romance). In fact, Holquist goes so far as to say that "it is largely intellectuals who keep Agatha Christie and Rex Stout writing into an indecent old age" (143) and that "The same people who spent their days with Joyce were reading Agatha Christie at night" (147) as an escape, not only from life, but also from the distressing message of most Modernist writers that "the certainties of the 19th century--positivism, scientism, historicism--seem to have broken down." (147)

While the intellectuals' "vice" would probably not account for the fact that nearly one-quarter of all fiction sold in the U.S. and England is crime fiction, (Symons 17) there is definitely one stream of detective fiction that appeals to a more literary set of readers. These novels often incorporate "serious" issues into the plot of conventional thrillers. Amanda Cross' Death in a Tenured Position is an example of this. A woman professor is killed at Harvard and the motive is found to be the other males' dislike of the trend of the hiring of female faculty.

When Kate, the "detective," goes to investigate, she finds it difficult to find facts as the all-male faculty presents a common front. By thematizing feminist issues Cross successfully combines the form of the detective novel with subject matter usually confined to "serious" novels. The novels by Rendell, James and Le Carré considered earlier also do the same thing. Yet the relationship between form and content set up by these writers does not create the kind of ideological subversion that most postmodern critics see as one of the characteristics of the movement. The only concept that this kind of relationship challenges is the artificial boundaries set up between "high" art and popular culture. This questioning is important because the definition of genres and their positioning in an implicit hierarchy of art is basically an academic undertaking, and by undermining the categorizations these novels make critics more aware of the arbitrary nature of all such definitions and judgements.

In this context, it seems important that we consider this trend of combining popular fictional forms and serious issues as itself a multi-dimensional one. While Fiedler unreservedly celebrates the postmodern tendency to appropriate forms of popular culture, Huyssen, I think rightly, points out that this in itself is a superficial gesture which is not enough to breach the opposition of "high" art and popular culture. Rather, we should see this tendency, like the movement postmodernism, as divided into two politically diverse streams. One, which is culturally and politically subversive, can be called "avantgarde" postmodernism, while the other trend, which Huyssen calls the "conservative" trend, "attacks the

appearance of capitalist culture. . . but misses its essence; like modernism, it is always also in sync with rather than opposed to the real processes of modernism." (213) Thus, writers like Rendell, James and Le Carré achieve only a confusion about the nomenclature of genres in their use of the forms of the thriller while actually strengthening the ideological biases of the form.

In An Unkindness of Ravens for example, though the story brings to the forefront issues concerning the social position of women, the fact that the novel ends with the capture of the murderer by the male detective Wexford with the help of the political and bureaucratic backup of the police is, after all, reassuring. The impact of the concerns raised by the novel is diffused by Rendell's conforming to the demands of the form of the novel. Similarly, in Amanda Cross' Death in a Tenured Position the issues of the male bias in academia are raised in the plot, but ultimately put to rest by the fact that Kate, though a female detective, can use the "male" values of rationality and individualism to solve the murder. Furthermore, she is helped by her reassuringly masculine husband, a district attorney who, when necessary, uses his contacts in the bureaucracy to help Kate out with a case, sometimes almost condescendingly. Even though Cross often emphasizes Kate's feminine beauty and grace, she is a feminine version of the typical detective.

At least the novels of Greene and Fowles try to go further by consciously avoiding the neat endings demanded by the form. Moreover, the fact that they also substitute value systems that are different from those inherent in the thriller

form is another way in which these writers focus on the issues they raise. Greene's concentration on personal integrity, for example, challenges the thriller's usual emphasis on physical action and heroism and replaces that with a system in which personal morality is privileged over values like bravery and physical stamina. By doing this, Greene is able to confuse the classifications even more than writers like Rendell can because he is more aware of the implicit "surface" ideology of the thriller form and so consciously works at undermining the inherent system of values.

This awareness about the form is one of the properties that separates "radical" postmodernism from "conservative" postmodernism. This is why the novels of Robbe-Grillet are considered among the most successful postmodern interactions between the popular form and serious content. Robbe-Grillet's anti-detective novels force the reader to concentrate on the act of reading and meaning creation by consistently attacking the reader's habits of expecting plot, characters and structure. By repeatedly undermining the reader's attempt to create coherence out of the text, Robbe-Grillet challenges the possibility of reassurance from the text. However, as Polan points out, "the equation of narrative with ideology. . . assumes that the non-narrative will somehow constitute a challenge to hegemonic workings of ideology" (173) and in several contemporary novels, the relationship is not always so simplistic. Mario Vargas Llosa's Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter has an extremely trivial story line, but the presentation of the story, the intertwining of the radio melodramas, and the exaggerations of

plot and character really say more about the relationships between popular culture and "high" culture than many non-narrative novels. This novel is more culturally subversive than his Who Killed Palomino Molero?, which is structurally faithful to the form of the thriller even though it has a more obvious and rebellious political stance than Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter. The crucial difference is the relationship between the different fictional forms of representation that is suggested in the novels. That is why I feel that the three novels in the last chapter are really the most subversive in cultural terms. They each seem to be trying to show the limitations of the ideology inherently diffused through popular genres by the form and emphases in their own novels. Very obliquely, these novels undermine the premise that the thriller form is capable of expressing "truths" about the socio-political environment. All of them present or emphasize the gap between personal, individual experience and "objective," "factual" accounts of events.

However, writers have chosen varying ways in which to highlight the issue of the form and function of literature. One of the more interesting novels in the thriller form is Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose. This novel uses the structure of the detective novel as William of Baskerville is called in to an abbey to use his famous rationality to solve the mystery about the death of a young monk. The book is set in medieval times and one of the issues of the novel is an intense theological debate that had become linked with the complex power struggles of the time. The solution of the crime highlights the impact of cultural

freedom on the political-theological power structure. William finds out that Jorge, the old, blind keeper of the most extensive library in the Western world, had decided to keep hidden, at any cost, a treatise on Comedy by Aristotle. Jorges feared that the discovery of this companion essay to Tragedy would undermine the Church because Comedy is a subversive force that mocks existing structures and would directly encourage the heretical forces of the time. Thematically therefore this novel brings to the forefront the connections between politics and culture and the potentially subversive effects of certain forms of fictional representation. The novel is constructed cleverly with the narrator recalling this experience many years after it happened. He inserts his own doubts and reassessments and Eco emphasizes the fragmentary nature of the story, but the theme as well as the formal characteristics engage the reader in the debate about the ideological implications of art forms. Of course, the novel is extremely complex and there are many levels of discourse that are developed simultaneously, but there is no doubt that the structure of the novel and the motive for the crime are two of the most important pieces of the mosaic. The names of the two central characters, William of Baskerville and Jorge (inviting mental connections with the blind Borges), force us to see the battle as one between popular culture and high art. In this novel, Eco integrates the theme into the form in a much more sophisticated way than the way in which writers like Amanda Cross integrate serious issues into the structure of the detective story. However, like the cinematization of Fowles' The Collector, the cinema version of

The Name of the Rose takes only the bare plot structure and leaves out the involved theological debates and their connections with the power structure of the time. These omissions may make the final product more accessible to many consumers, but they also negate the radical cultural implications of the novel. However, this kind of cinematic treatment shows how, like The Collector, this novel can be seen as an unusual but successful thriller. Thus, Fiedler's assumption that all fictional crossovers are necessarily subversive is rather superficial because novels like The Name of the Rose which integrate theme and structure to attack both political and cultural ideological hierarchies are rare.

Often writers take advantage of some of the other characteristics of the thriller, like the freedom the form gives them to concentrate on the daily lives of ordinary people. In more "serious" mainstream novels, we, the readers, are expecting to be presented with meaningful insights into social or philosophical issues. Even the characters should be interesting in their behavior or should be in the midst of some crisis that shows how they react to various stimuli. In a detective novel, the expectations of the reader are different. As Rabinowitz argues in "The Turn of the Glass Key: Popular Fiction as Reading Strategy," the reading strategies demanded by detective fiction are different from those demanded by "straight" fiction. Though he does not mention the importance of the slew of details about normal people that constitute the bulk of most thrillers, this seems to be one of the characteristics of the form that many writers try to exploit.

In most good thrillers, we expect and are given minute details about the situation we are reading about. In detective fiction, the investigator (and the reader) is on the lookout for any unusual occurrence that could lead to the identity of the murderer. To be able to identify what is usual, it is necessary to know what is normal; to know that the dog did not bark on the night the horse was stolen, we need to know that there is a dog and also who that dog would perceive as friendly before we, like Sherlock Holmes, can correlate the information to form the right answer ("Silver Blaze"). One of the favorite questions of the fictional investigators is whether anyone noticed anything unusual on the night of the murder. If the writer is to play fair with him/her, then the reader must, like the investigator, be given the chance find out what is normal. This is why the detective novel concentrates so much on the daily routine of the characters. Similarly, with the spy novels, the reader must be taken into the details of the planning of the operation to be able to appreciate all the possible pitfalls that could jeopardize it. Critics like Watson make fun of the excessive emphasis that thrillers place on details (Snobbery with Violence) but details are what constitute the reader's involvement with the story.

This is a characteristic that can be put to various uses by writers who are trying for something more than the typical thriller. The form allows the writer to present the daily lives of people in tremendous detail without becoming boring or over-burdened. P.D. James, for example, takes advantage of this characteristic by describing the lives of even incidental characters in minute detail. In her novels

these details add up to create characters multi-dimensionally while at the same time being part of the knowledge the detective garners in his/her investigations. For example, when Gray investigates the supposed suicide of Mark, in An Unsuitable Job for a Woman, her juxtaposition of the details of Mark's behavior bring her to the conclusion that he must have been murdered. The fact that he was a neat, organized person does not fit in with the state of Mark's room as Gray finds it. But James carries this detailing to excess as she describes the lives of even the minor characters and this is what gives her novels a dense quality which conveys the sense that we the readers are looking at a complete picture of society. Much of the description is really unnecessary for the plot of the novel, but James seems to want to be as detailed as possible. Often in her novels we get the sense that she is more interested in describing the lives of ordinary people than she is in the solution of the murder and that she is merely using this capacity of the thriller to its utmost. It seems that the form of the thriller provides the perfect fictional form for James to be able to concentrate on what she is really interested in. The fact that her non-thrillers, like Innocent Blood, fail as novels seems to support the idea that she could only write successfully while working within the confines of the structure of the thriller. In Innocent Blood one of the problems is that the novel seems too focussed on trivialities. While the theme of the novel is Phillipa's search for and acceptance of her true identity once she discovers that she is adopted, James' concentration on physical details seems excessive. One example of this would be the opening scene itself. Phillipa, who

has just reached the age when she can by law demand to know the circumstances of her adoption, is waiting to meet the social welfare worker who will discuss her case. This scene and the next, in which she does meet the official, are described with photographic realism. The color of the fading flowers on the table, the drab, depressing appearance of the office, the severe countenance of the official are all described in detail and, because most of the descriptions are rather negative, we, the readers, are already anticipating a bleak outcome for Phillipa's quest. That is to say, we cannot take such descriptons "neutrally" once we know that we are not reading a detective novel. The traditional novel demands that we consider these descriptions as important elements in the whole process of meaning creation, so we begin, unconsciously perhaps, to try to integrate these descriptions into our reading. As a result, the technique that works so well for James in the detective novel becomes oppressive and almost tritely symbolic in non-genre fiction. In the detective novel, we accept and appreciate this kind of description because when we are reading thrillers we expect the writer to fill us in with as much detail as possible, knowing that the clues to the mystery are hidden among these details. We are also willing to read an excessive amount of detailed description because the rules of the game demand that the writer disguise or hide the facts relevant to the solution of the mystery in a slew of irrelevant facts. This means that the reader gives importance to all the details, but in a different way. Each detail becomes a possible clue to the mystery of the plot; in the traditional novel each detail becomes part of a network of symbolic foreshadowing. Thus, the frame of

the detective story allows James the freedom to concentrate on the daily lives of the characters without seeming too mired down in details. On the other hand, writers who undermine the structure of the thriller are also challenging this very dependence of the form on details. Todorov's comments on detective fiction also suggest that the structure of this type of novel can actually be seen as an intertwining of two stories--the story of the crime and the story of the investigation. We, the readers, look back at the details once we know the correct solution and organize them accordingly. Thus, a new level of knowledge is reached at the end of the novel through the right ordering and juxtapositioning of the material.

One of the interesting points about the novels that I thought were challenging the ideological assumptions of the thriller is that they were all written by women. In the book After the Great Divide, Huyssen writes about "Mass Culture as Woman." In this chapter, he makes some interesting connections between the feminist movement and postmodernism. He notes that postmodernism's

> attempt to negotiate forms of high art with certain forms and genres of mass culture and the culture of everyday life. . .[occurs] more or less simultaneously with the emergence of feminism and women as major forces in the arts, and the concomitant re-evaluation of formerly devalued forms and genres of cultural expression. (59)

Huyssen concentrates primarily on what he sees as the modernist view of "high" art as masculine and mass culture as "feminine" and argues that the modernists' contempt for the popular arts is really a fear of the "other"--"the fear of nature out

of control, of the unconscious, of sexuality, of loss of identity and stable ego boundaries." (55) Popular culture is seen as emotion-based, full of "dreams and delusions" where the reader is invited to "merely consum[e] rather than produc[e]." (55) These characterizations do not completely fit the thriller form which, in general, promotes "masculine" values of rationality, thought, action and heroism. In fact, the impact of this conception is seen in the large number of women thriller writers who use male or sexually ambiguous names. The list, to give a few examples, includes E.X. Ferrars, P.D. James, E.C.R. Lorac, D.B. Olsen, R.B. Dominic, Dell Shannon, Craig Rice, Leslie Ford, Anthony Gilbert, John Stephen Strange, Tobias Wells and "dozens more." (Nevins 350) The three women writers I have discussed, Lessing, Spark and Murdoch, seem to be trying to undermine the authority of the "masculine" forms of thinking--objective and rational--by showing the limitations inherent in this method of knowledge formation, while privileging the more emotional, personal and subjective forms of thinking associated with "feminine" modes of thinking that rigorous rationality ignores or belittles. Thus these novels not only subvert the ideological claims of the thriller as being the vehicle of truth, but also the patriarchal beliefs implicit in the genre.

It seems then that the experimentation with the thriller form that so many critics are writing about has taken on not one, but several new dimensions. While earlier authors saw the popularity of the form as a possible way of enlarging their readership, others utilized the claim that only this form could cut through the

layers of appearance to lead to a valid exploration of society and politics. It was only in more recent times that authors began to question, in sophisticated ways, the ideology privileged by the form. The act of using the form of the thriller cannot be labelled culturally subversive in itself; rather, what should be considered as the defining characteristic is the relationship that is offered in the text between popular fiction and the mainstream novel.

Tani has seen this movement as a unilateral gesture towards the evolution of a new type of thriller; however, a look at the works of contemporary writers would suggest that this movement is multi-lateral in that the newer, more radical questionings of the form have not resulted in the demise of the thriller form. The typical thriller written by Sidney Sheldon or Frederick Forsyth is still on the best-seller list for weeks and the form seems to be undisturbed by the challenges offered by writers like Murdoch or Lessing or Robbe-Grillet. Indeed, the success of the form comes partly from its resilience that allows it to constantly adapt itself to contemporary issues. The very problem of naming the form reflects its capacity to adapt many sub-genres that have evolved to reflect or capitalize upon subtle changes in social or political climates. Among historians or critics of the form there is little debate about the fact that the spy novel, the suspense novel, the police novel and other forms are all related to one another and have sprung from the Dupin stories by Poe. However, the sheer number of sub-genres that have evolved which vary in emphasis but reflect basically similar ideological bases shows that the form has managed to thrive and therefore respond to the desires of

the reading public much more successfully than Tani seems to acknowledge. It seems to me that despite attacks on the ideological foundations of the thriller by contemporary novelists like Robbe-Grillet, the form has survived rather well and is likely continue to retain its place as one of the most successful genres of the modern age.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nilanjana Gupta (neé Bose) received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India, with honors in English literature in 1982. She completed her Master of Arts degree from the same University in 1985. She entered the doctoral program at the University of Florida, Gainesville, in 1987.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R. Brandon Kershner, Chairperson
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Greg Ulmer
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Daniel Cottom
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Beth Schwartz
Assistant Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John L. Ward
Professor of Art

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean, Graduate School